# PIN MONEY;

## A NOVEL.

BY THE AUTHORESS OF

"THE MANNERS OF THE DAY."

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"Here's something to buy pins;—marriage is chargeable."

VENICE PRESERVED.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON:

HENRY COLBURN AND RICHARD BENTLEY,

NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1831.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.



# PIN MONEY.

## CHAPTER I.

M'amuser, n'importe comment
  Fait toute ma philosophie !
Je crois ne perdre aucun moment
  Hors le moment où je m'ennuie.
Et je tiens ma tâche finie
  Pourvu que tout doucement
Je me défasse de la vie.

PARNY.

THE arrival of Lady Sophia Lee produced a gradual change in the occupations and connexions of Lady Rawleigh, which proved equally satisfactory to her husband, her brother, and herself.—It is true Lady Sophia was not precisely such a companion as the mild and timid Lady Launceston would have se-

lected for her daughter; for Mr. Richard Derenzy's charges against the abruptness of her demeanour and the opinionated and trenchant tone of her conversation were not altogether groundless. She seemed indeed to care nothing for the feelings of other people; and very little for her own. The influence of her callous philosophy was universal and unsparing.

But Lady Sophia was a woman of unimpeachable character, strong understanding, good connexions,—and peculiarly acceptable to the Derenzy family from her consanguinity with themselves. Lady Launceston therefore made it a point to cement her friendship with Frederica by every courtesy in her power to offer: and she had soon the satisfaction to perceive that their joint tenure of the Opera-box was the sole bond of amity remaining between Lady Rawleigh and Mrs. William Erskyne: while her daughter's intimacy with the Calder coterie was now only maintained with the ordinary politeness of society.

But if Lady Launceston in the warmth of her motherly heart rejoiced over these changes,

what was the rapture with which Sir Brooke perceived the groundlessness of his worst suspicions, and hailed the gradual disparition of the remainder! Frederica, secure in Lady Sophia of an eligible companion for her morning drives and afternoon rides, was no longer exposed to the perils of a tête-à-tête with Lord Calder, whether premeditated or unpremeditated. The fatal miniature was not only brought home in triumph from Rochard's to display its exquisite beauties in the dressing-room in Charles-street, but Sir Brooke had already gratefully bespoken a copy for his own at Rawleighford; — while under sanction of General and Lady Sophia Lee the mysterious Lord Vardington became in his real character a welcome visitor to the Rawleigh family. Under these favourable circumstances, he almost forgot to repine at the peculiar prolongation of the session;—and if once or twice he was heard to hazard some murmuring allusion to the verdure of the Warwickshire beech-woods, and the excellence of the Rawleighford strawberries, it was the opinion of all the aunts,

uncles, and cousins Derenzy, that dear Sir Brooke had never been seen in such excellent spirits.

By Miss Elbany's absence, too, Frederica appeared restored to her accustomed equanimity and tenderness of nature. Her mother was now once more her own;—her jealous fears on her husband's account were wholly dispelled. Even her apprehensions that Lord Launceston would disgrace himself by a double perfidy towards Lucy and Leonora had in a great measure subsided; although at times the undecided claims of Lady Mary Trevelyan and her brother's tender reminiscences of the companion, excited her indignation against his apparent infirmity of purpose.

But happy as she was, and restored to the confidence of all who were dear to her, there was still one thorn among the roses,—one fatal remembrancer of past follies,—haunting like the tangible *memento mori* of the Egyptian festivals the scene of all her enjoyments. She had never yet found courage to acquaint Sir Brooke with the circumstance of her losses at

play;—and although deterred from the confession chiefly by an apprehension that it might be interpreted into a hint for pecuniary assistance in the scrape, the sin of disingenuousness weighed heavily on her heart. Five weeks, too, were still to elapse previous to the quarterly payment of her pin money: and the price of the miniature and a few other inevitable purchases had reduced her stock within a few sovereigns of total exhaustion. No one indeed thought less of money than Frederica,—because no one could have been placed more completely beyond its need; nor till she found herself threatened with an empty purse, had a pecuniary care ever intruded on her mind. But she now became perplexed by a thousand vague presentiments. Every single knock at the door seemed annunciatory of some trifling bill peculiarly addressed to her "separate maintenance,"—some milliner's or shoemaker's, or haberdasher's, or bookseller's "small account."—Whenever a wafered note was placed in her hands, she scarcely dared unfold the nauseous page, from a dread of some

authenticated memorial from a poor widow with half a dozen small children, or from some starving labourer with a broken limb. Never had she been so morbidly sensitive to the wants of the poor;—never so fervent in her wishes for the preservation and prosperity of his Majesty's lieges;—and she would have preferred to see all Grosvenor-square blackened into ashes, rather than that a destructive fire should take place in the purlieus of St. Giles's, or that populous city of Irish starvation, the Westminster Broadway! — She was, in short, thoroughly humiliated by the consciousness of bankruptcy; and Lady Rawleigh of Rawleighford,—with her diamonds, her equipages, and her *pin money*,—would have been as heartily rejoiced by the discovery of a fifty pound note in her dressing-case, as any of the memorializing widows or fractured bricklayers!

Meanwhile, the season held its course with more than its wonted intemperance of dissipation. Balls,—both fancy and matter-of-fact,—concerts,—dinner-parties,—water-parties,—breakfasts,—and picnics,—were successively hailed

in prospect, yawned over in endurance, and apostrophized as charming on the following week. A few new marriages, new scandals, and new ruinations, enlivened the scene,—one mansion was devoted to white favours,—one dishonoured by a divorce-bill,—and another by that of an auctioneer pasted against the door-posts. Lady Barbara Dynley was said to have lost an alarming sum of money,—and Mrs. William Erskyne a considerable amount of reputation.

It was while pondering over this latter contingency, and reflecting upon the difficulty of offering advice to her giddy friend, or extricating herself from the connexion without a serious explanation and dispute, that Frederica was one morning assailed by Lady Sophia Lee.

"What are you doing with those broken harp-strings," cried she, as she burst into the drawing-room, "and on what are you cogitating so profoundly?—Considering how to evade Mrs. Waddlestone's impending concert,—and

stay at home for the enjoyment of what our friend Lord George calls

> The whithpered dweam of heartht allied
> The pwethure of the thwilling hand!"

"Neither!" replied Lady Rawleigh. "I am reflecting on the horrors of a bridal visit which Lady Olivia insists on my paying this morning to her ci-devant friend Mrs. Woodington."

"To Lady Twadell!—is that exquisite treat really vouchsafed us?—What a luxury!—I trust you have not promised yourself to your aunt for the occasion, for I must insist that we enjoy it together."

"With all my heart;—your carriage is here,—let us go immediately."

"Willingly!—on condition that you lend me some shabby old bonnet for the ceremony."

"Surely the beautiful piece of Parisianism you have on, is better fitted for the occasion than any thing my wardrobe can afford?"

"By no means!—I conceive my white moire

bonnet with its elm-branch, to be one of the prettiest in London; and I must insist on having some old Dunstable horror, such as you assume, to visit the poor women in your Warwickshire village. I would not for the world but gratify Lady Twadell by affording an advantageous contrast to her bridal finery. One should always be considerate towards the foibles and predilections of one's friends."

"Lady Twadell, I fancy, is as little yours as mine. But pray do not disfigure yourself this morning; for I wish you to take me afterwards to Lady Rochester's—of whom I have been totally negligent during the ten days of your stay in town; and she attacked me fiercely on the subject last night in Lady Axeter's concert-room. Pray reserve the elm-branch for Lady Rochester!—She is really deserving some recherche de toilette, for no one makes it more seriously the study of her life."

"I would not go near her for the value of Lady Twadell's trousseau! She is one of the few persons who expose me to the heavy responsibility of unchristian hatred!" cried Lady So-

phia, growing alternately red and pale with a degree of emotion such as Frederica had never before traced on her countenance.

"Indeed!—I have seen you go through the ceremony of greeting in society, and was not aware that any ungracious feeling secretly subsisted between you. Before your arrival I lived very much in that Calder House set, and was very well amused. But neither my brother nor Rawleigh were pleased with the connexion."

"Yes, yes!—I know it all! Before I had been twenty-four hours in town, one of your dear friends,—whom I will not name to you, because I think you would be justified in boxing her ears on detection,—informed me that 'poor dear Lady Rawleigh was exposing herself sadly on Lord Calder's account;—that she owed him a vast sum of money;—and that most people thought some very terrible dénouement would occur before the season was over.' Knowing *you*, I was not apprehensive;—but knowing him, I felt anxious to do my part in breaking off so pernicious a liaison. Pardon

me, my dear coz., if my officious zeal has sometimes tempted me to bestow on you an importunate measure of my tediousness."

"I am quite sure you cherish no such modest apprehension!" cried Lady Rawleigh, affectionately. "I am however of your opinion that Calder is a dangerous bosom friend for a woman of my age; and will own it is just as well that our intimacy was checked. That is as much as I can allow!—And now, come and choose your bonnet from my ugliest assortment, and I promise you not to decoy you to Lady Rochester's on any pretence."

"Whose flaunting liveries are those?" said Lady Sophia, as they stopped at the door of the bridegroom Viscount, in Hertford-street. "By the splendours of the hammercloth I could be tempted to believe that odious offset of the Derenzy tree, our cousin of Luttrell, was beforehand with us this morning."

"I rejoice that you judge so harshly of yonder Leadenhall-street equipage," said Frederica, laughing; "for it is the favourite appanage of a lady who is so unlucky as to sail in the

north of my opinion. Do you remember a certain Laura Mapleberry?"

"Who was laying active siege to Rawleighford when I quitted England?—I recollect feeling terribly afraid lest Lady Mapleberry should involve poor Brooke in the Oriental misdemeanour of polygamy; for she seemed to me to make love to him with her full battery of daughters."

"Fortunately the whole volley of Miss Mapleberrys missed fire;—and Laura,—the fieldpiece of the park,—consoled herself by marrying a yellow nabob,—a Sir Christopher Lotus;—

A puny insect shivering at a breeze,

whom they keep alive in cotton like the exotic snakes in a zoological collection. When I am in an amiable frame of mind, I really pity the poor girl; for I fancy this little old man of the sea is as tiresome and malignant as any Afrite Genius released from the eye of a needle in the caverns of Caucasus."

Turning at that moment towards her companion, Frederica was surprised and shocked to perceive the countenance of Lady Sophia distorted as if by some painful spasm, while she involuntarily exclaimed, "How dreadful!—what a disgraceful meeting!—one woman who has sold herself for rank—another for money,—another for——God forgive us!"

Before Lady Rawleigh could recover her amazement at this startling apostrophe, they were ushered into the drawing-room of the bride;—where, according to their anticipations, they found Lady Lotus accompanied by Miss Matilda Mapleberry, in the act of offering her congratulations. The room was redolent of orange-flowers, gardenias, heliotropes, and all the most fragrant offerings of the Woodington-park conservatories; nor was Frederica surprised that in such an atmosphere the new Viscountess should find it necessary to assume an attitude of elegant languor, among the embroidered cushions of her sofa,—and to hold in her hand a flacon of

aromatic salts encased in gold basket-work, which "ever and anon she gave her nose."

"My dear Lady Sophia," exclaimed the bride, half rising from her seat on their entrance, "how very kind of you to recollect me:—Lady Rawleigh! I am delighted to see you. Really among the crowds which throng around us on these embarrassing occasions, it is quite refreshing to see one welcome face! Between Lord Twadell's numerous family connexions, and my own extensive acquaintance, I assure you I have never had one moment, since my return to England, to think of any thing but thanking my friends for their flattering attentions;—or, as you may suppose, I should have done something towards reforming the barbarisms, solecisms, and improprieties of this Gothic mansion."

"I see nothing that demands a change," replied Lady Rawleigh with perfect simplicity; casting her eyes round the apartments, which were splendidly furnished, although not in the newest gloss of novelty.

"A bachelor's residence," minced the Viscountess, "cannot of course be expected to afford all those little refinements of luxury which spring forth under the culture of a female hand."

"Certainly not!" said Lady Sophia, resolved to discompose her affectation. "Lord Twadell will naturally expect you to give a new aspect to things; and when you have had Banting here, and Morel, and got rid of all this obsolete lumber, really the house itself will not be so *very* much amiss. Of course, when it is entirely refitted, you will avoid the gaudy taste,—the superabundance of gilding and varnish,—by which it is now disfigured Nothing is more odious or more thoroughly exploded than finery;—it appears left by general consent to city knights and retired nabobs."

Lady Lotus grew very fidgetty on her chair;—and Miss Matilda ventured a few incoherent sentences touching the new suite at Chatsworth, and the new furniture at Windsor Castle.

"I beg your pardon?"—said Lady Sophia, interrogatively,—resolved to make her speak intelligibly; and Miss Mapleberry with some indignation found herself obliged to recapitulate her unlucky illustrations.

"Chatsworth!—Windsor!"—said Lady Sophia, with a significant smile. "Of course I was not alluding to palaces, or to the mansions of persons of illustrious rank. I spoke of our own middling sphere of life;—and it would be absurd indeed in Lady Rawleigh, Lady Twadell, or myself, to emulate the magnificence of persons of so elevated a position in the world!"

The new Viscountess had recourse to her salts. To be compared with a country baronet's wife! —with a ladyship by courtesy!

"These pictures, too," continued Lady Sophia, "you will of course despatch to Lord Twadell's country seat?"

Lady Rawleigh longed to whisper to her that his lordship possessed only a tumble-down Castle Rackrent mortgaged over rafters and roof, on the borders of the Bog of Allen.

"They are generally thought very fine," said Lady Twadell.—"Two of them are Rubens's."

"Oh yes!—I recognize my old friends;—the originals are in Prince Lichtenstein's gallery at Vienna. Excellent gallery-pictures,—or even admissible in a fine old oak dining-room in the country;—but a Rubens in a drawing-room facing the evening-sun, is almost too much for one in the fervid months of June and July."—

"You must send them to Woodington Park," cried Lady Lotus, bringing up her forces to the support of her discountenanced friend. "Did you ever see Woodington, Lady Rawleigh?—I really think it is one of the most beautiful places in England."

"You are partial, my dear Lady Lotus!" simpered the bride.—"I own it *has* been much admired,—and there seldom appears a series of the distinguished country seats of the kingdom, in which it is not included. It has been vignetted twice in Peacock's Repository."

"Surely the house is visible for some miles

from the North-road?" inquired Frederica without intending an epigram.

"Aha!—the plantations not yet grown up?" said Lady Sophia. "That accounts for General Lee's ignorance of its whereabout.—His father, Lord Frederick, had an old family seat in that neighbourhood where the General's childhood was passed,—but he could not bring himself to recollect Woodington.—I conclude it has been built since he left the country."

Lady Twadell was on the point of making some bitter allusion to General Lee's antediluvian reminiscences, when it occurred to her that he had been fag at Eton to her own bridegroom the Viscount; and she was therefore forced to content herself with observing, "Woodington Park was sketched by Capability Brown, and completed by Repton. Picturesque Price used to say that the artificial water was a triumph of art; and many of the first artists—Copley Fielding, Dewint, Nicholson, and Glover, have visited it for the benefit of their composition landscapes."—

"*I* cannot see any thing so very delightful,"

said Lady Lotus, "in being surrounded by grim forests and overgrown woods, which compel one to build a Tower of Babel, like Mr. Beckford, in order to overlook the country."

"I fancy," observed Lady Sophia secretly enjoying the storm she had raised, "I fancy Vathek's tower was projected to enable him to overlook the pigmies of the earth, and not its natural productions. It must be a triumphant sensation to exist in a region above all contact with the mites of corruption;—a sphere where the stars seem to shine more brightly, and where the grosser exhalations of the world attain not! —There!—there is a burst of the sublime and beautiful for you!—But to descend from such abstruse altitudes, pray tell me, my dear Lady Twadell, how did you manage to get over the splendid trousseau I saw preparing for you in Paris?,"

"I declare I hardly know!—I believe Herbault undertook it;—or some of Lord Twadell's people managed the business."

"But Herbault holds too closely to his pre-

rogative to interfere with any thing less ethereal than gauze and marabouts; and I am sure I saw a Viscountess's coronet, embroidered on some dozens of dozens of dozens of familiar garments in lawn and cambric, on the counters of half the lingères of St. Honoré. Oh! here is Lady Olivia Tadcaster! She will tell us how she manages these affairs;—but then her interest will always procure *her* the name of one of the ambassadors as a *passe-droit.*"

Lady Olivia, however, was an independent personage who always thought proper to select her own vein of loquacity; and after paying her compliments to her former protégée the Viscountess,—towards whom she preserved a slight degree of pique for having accomplished a matrimonial barter without her intervention,—admired the mechlin of her cap, and hinted that women of a certain age always did well to envelop the mysteries of their faces in a similar framework *by daylight,*—she turned suddenly to Lady Lotus with many expressions of delight at so opportune an encounter.

"I fully intended calling on you this morn-

ing if I could possibly manage to get so far as Portland-place. But really it is *so* out of one's beat that I can seldom accomplish the journey; and I keep a little by-list of my East Indian friends,—the directors' wives,—and one or two Calcutta people such as Lady Cabob and Mrs. Budgerow whom I picked up one autumn at Cheltenham,—so that I may contrive to strike them all off in one morning."

"I should have been extremely sorry," said Lady Lotus, swelling with indignation, "had your Ladyship taken the trouble of driving so far in compliment to *me*."

"Oh! pray don't mention it," cried Lady Olivia with a spontaneous and unpremeditated flow of impertinence. "I should have thought nothing of it, only I have promised to be with Lady Axeter this afternoon—who lives, you know, in Arlington-street, in the civilized part of the town;—to take her some little saleable trumperies which I have persuaded my worthy Ash Bank neighbours, the Miss Peewits, to put out their eyes in manufacturing for her Charity Bazaar.—And by the way, I certainly *will* buy

Clara Peewit a pair of green spectacles before I go back into Essex ;—they cost little or nothing in the Burlington Arcade. As to her sister Maria, I wipe off my obligations to *her* by making over to her my patronage at the Missionary Society, the Tract Association, and the Auricular Infirmary,—for which I have no possible use."

Lady Sophia and Frederica involuntarily exchanged glances. But Lady Lotus could not so tamely put up with the affronts offered to her own gorgeous domicile.—

"Next to these charming Park-lane residences," she observed, pointedly addressing the bride, "I must say I prefer an airy quarter, such as the immediate vicinity of the Regent's-park. The Duke of Droneham, who frequently calls on me in his daily drive, is always envying our situation; and old Lady Borenough declares she should expect to live for ever, if she resided in Portland-place."

"For the benefit of posterity let us hope she may never quit Argyll-street!" cried Lady Sophia. "As to the Duke of Droneham, the

poor asthmatic old soul only contrives to exist by airing himself half the day among the kangaroos in the Zoological gardens."

"But to return to the motive of my visit," interrupted Lady Olivia, although she had never yet alluded to the subject. "I think, my dear Lady Lotus, I may say that I have satisfactorily executed your mission."

"Oh! I will not hear a word about it now," cried poor Laura, looking extremely uneasy, "or you will deprive me of the pleasure of your promised visit. I am in no hurry to acquaint myself with the result."

Notwithstanding the assiduity with which Lady Twadell now attempted the task of amusing Lady Sophia and her friend,—whom she conceived could be in no way interested in any affair pending between Lady Lotus and Lady Olivia while the attentions of a viscountess were at their disposal,—they managed to overhear the following interesting rejoinder.

"Why really nothing would give me greater pleasure than to wait on you, but you see, my dear ma'am, although my horses are only jobs,

so that I can work them without compunction, I am obliged to have a little mercy on my servants; therefore, as we *have* met, I may as well give you Mrs. Waddlestone's answer at once. I told her, as you desired, how much you had been indebted to Mr. W.'s politeness at the races,—and how long you had been anxious to make her acquaintance,—that Mrs. Luttrell had promised to make the introduction at her ball, and all the rest of it;—and she begged me to assure you, that—"

"Thank you—thank you," cried the agonized Lady Lotus. "I am infinitely obliged by the explanation you have given. Having expressed my thanks for the use of Mr. Waddlestone's carriage, I need not trouble either your ladyship or myself further on the subject."

"Oh! excuse me, the most important part of the negotiation remains unexplained. Mrs. Waddlestone requested me to say that she should make it a point to take an early opportunity of returning your card; but with respect to an invitation for you and the Miss Mapleberrys to her concert, she regretted to say that it was

quite out of her power,—that the whole affair is under the arrangement of the Princesse de Guéménée and the Duchess of Whitehaven, with whom I fancy you are not acquainted."

Lady Lotus, with a face like scarlet, now rose to take leave, while Lady Sophia inquired of the viscountess, "*You*, of course, are going to Waddlestone House?—It will be the best thing of the season, and a capital opportunity to show off some of your bridal embroideries"

"Why really just now," said Lady Twadell, looking oppressed with humility, "while the eyes of all the world are upon me, I wish to avoid the tax of going into public. Next year I shall be no longer a novelty,—shall have subsided into the multitude."

"You need not be afraid of any embarrassing distinction at the Waddlestones'," said Lady Sophia. "You will be outroared by a whole herd of lions."

"Rossini is coming over from Madrid for the occasion;—Fodor has promised to recover her voice for that one day;—Paganini is to play on

two violins with one bow;—Pasta will sing an English ballad;—and Malibran a Yankee comic song!—Don't be the least alarmed," said Lady Olivia, putting forth with great naïveté the announcements she had credulously received from Lord Launceston; "I assure you your presence will not be remarked among such a host of wonders."

"Who *are* these Waddlestones?" persisted Lady Twadell, fastidiously. "People one can know without committing oneself?"—

"That depends on the position of the parties," said Lady Sophia. "The Draxfields, Axeters, Wroxworths, Guéménées, Whitehavens, and persons of that stamp can know them with perfect security. I doubt whether *you* are yet sufficiently established in society to venture."

"I dare say I shall be forced there whether I like it or not," said the bride, languidly. "Lord Twadell knows every one, and I have little doubt these Waddlestones will give him no peace till we promise to go."

"Lord Twadell was so shocked at my rash-

ness in presenting Mrs. Waddlestone," said Frederica, "that I am pretty sure you will meet with no compulsion from *him* on this occasion."

"Why surely you do not mean that all this fuss is about a party to be given by that preposterous soapboiler's wife?" cried the viscountess, having again recourse to her salts. "What will the world come to!"

"I cannot guess!" cried Lady Sophia, rising for departure;—"but at present it is going, you see, to Waddlestone House; and I recommend you to join it, if you can in any way diplomatize for an invitation. Good morning, Lady Twadell!—I leave you to arrange the matter with Lady Olivia Tadcaster, who on such occasions is the kindest and most efficient plenipotentiary in Europe."

## CHAPTER II.

Tells how each beauty of her mind and face
Was brightened by some sweet peculiar grace;
Tells how her manners, by the world refin'd,
Left all the taint of modish vice behind,
And made each charm of polished courts agree
With candid truth's simplicity.
And uncorrupted innocence.

LYTTLETON.

But an entertainment was destined to precede the morning concert at Waddlestone House which, if less difficult of access, was far more eagerly sought by the universal throng of the fashionable world.

Lord Calder, although he usually restricted himself to a specific routine of hospitality,—of the noblest and most distinguished order but unmarked by any mountebank displays to excite the criticisms of the newspapers and the

witticisms of the clubs,—having now discovered that Lady Rawleigh pertinaciously abstained from appearing at his weekly soirées, and that she had declined two dinner-parties expressly framed in her honour, resolved on taking some marked step to allure her to his house. When they met in the nightly round of balls or parties, she received his attentions with the same gentle courtesy as heretofore,—so that he had no reason to apprehend any serious displeasure or estrangement on her part; while the frank and lady-like demeanour of Lady Sophia Lee satisfied him that whatever feelings *she* might entertain towards him, her sentence was not for "*open* war."—When he made his appearance as usual in Lady Rawleigh's box at the Opera, Frederica received him without embarrassment, but without empressement;—made no effort to amuse or detain him;—and left his conversation wholly at Mrs. Erskyne's disposal, who seemed well satisfied to turn it to good account. But this easy self-possession was far more attractive and perplexing to a man accustomed like Calder to

the arts and caprices of her sex, than the most flighty airs of pique or coquetry. He knew not how to deal with her relapse into the listless tranquillity of indifference; but was more than ever stimulated to overcome the stubborn simplicity of so artless a character.

It is generally asserted that men of dissipated habits entertain a pretty universal contempt for the female sex. But this is a gross misrepresentation. A dissipated man, unless degraded by unusual stupidity of nature, possesses a peculiar tact for distinguishing a woman whose conduct and sentiments are really unexceptionable, and at once entertains a holy reverence towards herself and them. Lord Calder had never misjudge Lady Rawleigh, even in her unguarded encouragement of his advances,—even in the imprudent obligations she had unwittingly contracted in his favour. He saw that he had been indebted for his temporary advantage to some agency the nature of which was inscrutable to his penetration; and he was now satisfied that her eyes had been opened to the true character of his views and feelings, either accidentally or

by the interference of an officious friend; and that she had resolved to terminate the connexion as gradually and unostentatiously as the occasion would permit.

There were circumstances, however, which tempted him to hope that she had entangled herself too deeply in his toils to recede without much effort; and as he found it impossible to obtain admission in Bruton-street, or address himself to her at the Opera without danger from the mole-cared vigilance of the malicious Louisa, or even obtain her attention in general society,—where her increasing popularity attracted the homage of half the distinguished young men of the day,—he determined on sending out cards for a fancy-ball; or rather a masque of the old school, such as would render Calder House the rendezvous of the whole *grand monde*,—and from whence Lady Rawleigh could scarcely absent herself without some very particular motive or plausible excuse.

Frederica indeed entertained no such intention. Sir Brooke, Lord Launceston, Lady So-

phia,—all were included in the invitation; nor had there been any thing in Lord Calder's conduct towards her to require their resentment or urge them to renounce the most brilliant fête of the season. *In London society it is by no means necessary to feel, or even to affect, the* slightest respect or regard for the proprietors of those mansions where we drink our best champagne, or tread our liveliest measures; and more than one member of the fashionable world can boast a visiting list graced by the most illustrious names, and a ball-room crowded by the most distinguished guests, who is thought of and spoken of with personal contempt and disgust.

The characters in the projected masque or tableau, which were distributed by Lord Calder's express interference, were selected from Spenser's Faery Queen; and while Lady Rochester naturally appropriated to herself the dignities of Gloriana, Frederica found the part of the spotless Una humbly tendered to her acceptance. But without even taking counsel with those whose prejudices she knew so well

to interpret, she immediately despatched a note to Lord Calder, definitively declining any ostensible share in the pageant; but promising to join the circle in some group unconnected with the principal exhibition. On reflection, too, this was a plan which suited better with those of his lordship. He had laid at her feet the highest tribute the occasion afforded; and was sensible that her society would be more at his own disposal if unfettered by an arbitrary part in the drama.

All London—in which phrase are included some five hundred persons, the elect of fashion, who regard all other castes as issued from the feet of Brahma instead of their own dignified source of origin—the head of the false divinity,—*all London* was now excited to the highest pitch of frivolous eagerness for the event! Artists of every denomination,—painters, sculptors, and poets,—authorities of every calibre, from the British Museum to Dandy Colnaghi's portfolios,—were laid under contribution; and select committees appointed in divers dwellings of the young and beautiful.—

Strings of pearls were tried in profusion among clusters of equally redundant ringlets, before many a gorgeous mirror; and Persian pantoufles fitted on many a foot worthy to elicit the raptures bestowed by Rousseau on those of Madame D'Houdetot. Bribes were mysteriously dispensed to the forewomen of Triaud and Duchon, that they might do their spiriting secretly as well as gently; and many a fair exclusive continued to lisp her declarations that "upon her honour she could not make up her mind with respect to her costume," many days after the said costume had been snugly deposited in the armoire of her dressing-room. Lord George was perplexing the snip of the Opera-house with "diwectionth for his Petwaach dweth,"—and was in agonies under the impending horror of having Lady Margaret Fieldham forced on his acceptance as his "*fera, mansueta e bella.*" General Lorriston proposed accompanying his nephew as Cardinal Colonna, crowned with a hat resembling a scarlet champignon;—Louisa Erskyne had manœuvred herself into the part rejected by Frederica;—while

Lord Putney promised to enact one of her lions, provided she could persuade Traveller Broughley to roar as his comrade.

It was within a week of this elaborate festival, when one morning Lord Launceston sauntered into Frederica's drawing-room, to inquire at what hour he was to accompany Lady Sophia and herself in their daily ride;—and had the satisfaction to find Sir Brooke lounging over the Quarterly Review, as contentedly as he had ever done at Rawleighford, and to discover,—although his arrival produced sundry diatribes on the heat of the weather as an excuse for this uxorious domestication,—that his brother was in fact breaking through an engagement with Mr. Lexley, in order to enjoy the society of his Frederica.

"I want to engage you in my service," said the latter, as Sir Brooke hurried away to his toilet to prepare for the execution of this neglected duty. "We cannot make up our Pirate group for Calder House without your assistance."

"I am sorry for that,—for I have not the

least thought of adding to the congregation of blockheads to be assembled on that occasion."

"But my dear William you promised from the first to be of our party."

"Did I?—Then I did not know what I was talking of;—or perhaps I pleaded the invitation to escape a tea-party at old grandmother Derenzy's, or a little commission to step down to Broadstairs to hire a lodging for Lady Olivia."

"No! you promised to go, simply to oblige your sister; and I positively will not let you off unless you have some real, right-down, positive engagement with Miss Waddlestone to interfere with my claims!"

"Real, right-down, positive engagement with Leonora!" reiterated Lord Launceston. "It seems to me as if my destiny decreed me to be engaged on all occasions to the whole world, and always in my own despite. But seriously, dearest Fred., you must excuse my attendance at Calder House;—I am so miserably out of spirits just now, that I am not prepared to carry an extra load of absurdity; I can play no part

but that of a repining, irresolute, and unhappy man."

"I trust, dearest Launceston," said Frederica affectionately, "that your affairs—"

"Are not, just now, my bitterest grievance, although in a most dilapidated condition. No! Fred!—I have resolved to let Marston,—since the fates forbid my deliverance by selling it;—to go abroad, retrench, grow mad and desperate; and either calcine myself geologizing in the crater of Vesuvius; or go to sleep in a snow-drift on the Grand Mulet. I am tired of this life of imposture and monotony;—and I will leave *you*, dearest, to inherit my estates, pay off my mortgages, and make my apologies to Lady Mary Trevelyan."

"I rejoice to perceive that you are not *quite* in earnest;—that like other young gentlemen in debt and in love, you are only a little hypochondriacal this morning."

"It is a very provoking thing,," cried Lord Launceston, growing half angry, "that I never can persuade any one I am in earnest. There have I been sitting these two hours with my

mother, threatening to take a dose of morphine or Prussic acid without consulting Camomile, unless she afforded me a certain piece of intelligence which I demanded at her hands:—and she actually sat listening to me, and smiling over her chocolate, as if I had menaced myself with a cup of water-gruel!"

"Which intelligence was doubtless the residence of Miss Elbany's family,—or at last the actual place of her retreat?—It does not require the art of a wizard to detect the motive of your despondency."

"Perhaps *you* will be more merciful, Frederica, and let me into the secret?"

"I?—I must possess a wondrous skill in divination to penetrate into the mysteries of such a child of the mist as your fair friend."

"But possibly Rawleigh may have given you intelligence on the subject?"

"What interest or information can *he* possess concerning an obscure advertising 'Companion to a lady of quality?'—Depend on it Rawleigh knows and cares as little about the young lady as I do."

"You never were more mistaken!—He was constantly closeted with her in Charles-street; and I have every reason to believe they had a long interview on the very morning of her departure."

"Indeed!" said Frederica reddening with emotion, which a single moment's reflection on the absurdity of her former suspicions fortunately enabled her to subdue. "But why do you not make your inquiries of Wrightson, who accompanied Miss Lucy in her expedition?"

"I have,—I did;—but as I could neither offer a bribe to a worthy woman who was present at my birth, nor cudgel her on conviction of having given me false information, where was the use of my inquiries?"

"Poor good old Wrightson is incapable of misleading any one."

"I found her very capable of misleading *me*. I suspected, indeed, from a sly glance of the old traitress's eye under her spectacles, that she was will-of-the-wisping me with her story of 'the pleasant little village of Wansfield, near

Lewes; and Miss's uncle being curate; and Miss being sent for to meet an old aunt from Madeira!'"

"And did it really turn out to be a Crack-skull-Common romance of my son Tony's?" inquired Lady Rawleigh, laughing in spite of herself at her brother's half comic,—half indignant air.

"Nothing less, on my honour!—I was ideot enough to set off in the mail, and waste three days in hunting out this Utopian 'pleasant little village of Wansfield' throughout the county of Sussex!—From Lewes they passed me like a parish vagrant to Winfield;—from Battle to Wentsfield; from Horsham to Walfield; in short I was obliged to confess my defeat on every *field* of those verdant pastures of Wessex."

"Poor fellow!—I should like to have been present when you upbraided your Charles-street enemies on your return."

"No—no! although I acknowledge myself to *you* as a conquered knight, believe me my pride preserved me from the spectacle of their

triumph. My mother has not the least conjecture of my wild-goose expedition;—nor that I am more interested in Miss Elbany's exits and entrances than in those of Chloe."

"And why should you imagine Rawleigh less indifferent?" hesitated Frederica, bending over the frame in which she was diligently weaving the Iris-like glories of a macaw with a cherry in its beak, for the merino cushion of her mother's bergère.

"I have already given you reasons sufficient to satisfy a rational being; in addition to which I shall only observe that on the day of Lucy's journey (*you* were at Ash Bank, and *I* was executing commissions for Lady Sophia Lee), Brooke passed the whole morning condoling with our respectable parent; and when I broke in upon them they were engaged in a discussion which had actually brought tears into the eyes of both."

Lady Rawleigh blushed when the possibility occurred to her mind that this family argument might have turned upon the levity, or seeming levity, of a wife and daughter sacredly dear to

the hearts of the disputants; and in order to escape the little flying twinges of conscience which, like those of the gout, are useless unless concentrated into a decided fit, she returned to the subject of the *bal costumé*.

"Then you are absolutely determined to absent yourself from Lord Calder's fête?"

"My dear sister, you know I have always hated buffooneries of that description; I was never intended for a London man. I like a dinner-party or a moderate circle of friends, where one may talk or be talked to without exciting speculation and quizzery,—or a country-house filled with a well-assorted party. But as to those glaring ball-rooms, where you flock in mobs to show your finery, and live in terror of the sneers of your acquaintance, I cannot describe the ludicrous and vexatious associations they produce in my mind. I have never found myself in possession of sufficient industry or sufficient idleness—(and I assure you both are required for the pursuit)—to form connexions and friendships among the motley tribes of fashionable life; and standing as I do

apart amid the throng, all your mincings, and moppings and mowings, and manœuvrings,—all your affected raptures and *impromptus fait à loisir*,—all your laborious smiles and forced animation,—your manufactured conversations and factitious friendships,—appear to me like the ill-played drama of a company of strollers. I have looked round me sometimes at Almack's, without being able to discover a single person appearing in a natural character, or acting without some latent motive."

"Now you are beginning to overcharge your picture and I am satisfied;—none but a weak argument requires the support of caricature. Granting, however, that your satires possess some general truth, why should you concentrate them against this one unlucky party?"

"And in what assumed guise does your ladyship intend to render night hideous on the occasion?" said Lord Launceston, perceiving from Frederica's earnestness that she was really desirous of his company.

"I mentioned to Lord Calder last night at the Duchess of Draxfield's, that I had some

idea of making up a group from the Pirate, provided I could persuade Lady Sophia to lend me her flaxen hair and azure eyes in the part of Brenda.—Her's is the true Saxon character of beauty."

"Why don't you make her Rowena then at once,—and exhibit your own jetty curls as Rebecca?—in which case I will be Isaac the Jew at your bidding."

"No!—no!—Rawleigh has not a sufficiently chivalrous air for Ivanhoe; and the Hebrew maiden is represented as a paragon of loveliness. Minna Troil claims no such superiority; and while Lady Sophia and myself profit by the opportunity to economize our costume in all the Zetland simplicity of a few ells of Tartan, Sir Brooke would make a very respectable Mordaunt Merton; and *you*, Launceston, with your dishevelled curls, form an admirable representative of the dauntless Cleveland."

"Thus spake the rover
To his gallant crew,
Up with the black flag,
Down with the blue!"

cried Launceston, after a rapid discomposure of his raven locks. Then sinking back on the sofa and resuming his former listless tone, he observed,—"No—no!—I am not up to the thing."

"But believe me 'the thing' requires no such tact and trouble as you anticipate. I shall not even attempt to add the pleasantries of 'glorious John' to our group, unless the Duke of Draxfield persists in joining us; and as to a Norna, I would on no account attract attention by recruiting so prominent a personage."

"All you mean to do, in short," said her brother provokingly, "is to simper through the suite at Calder-house in a somewhat uglier gown than usual;—while Lady Sophia as the lint-white Brenda

Seems by her dusky guide, like morning led by night."

"Just so!—and as you decline affording us the sanction of your expressive countenance to qualify our monotony, I suppose I must accept Lord Calder's offer of his nephew, Mr. Rockingham, who will complete our group in the character of the Pirate."

"What an odious thing to be dependent on a rich and arbitrary uncle!" cried Lord Launceston. "Calder positively talks of lending you that poor boy as if he were an opera-ticket, or the volume of a new novel!"

"I wish he were any thing half so amusing! —However, the gallant Alfred is remarkably good looking, and will show well as a Buccaneer."

"Well—well!" said Launceston, rising from his seat as his brother-in-law entered, whom he had promised to accompany as far as Westminster, "if you can prevail on Lady Sophia to convert her Minerva majesty into the nothingness of the daughter of Magnus Troil, I am at all risks for your foolery."

Glad to have accomplished her purpose, whether through the influence of her brother's vanity or good nature, Frederica wished them good-bye with the intention of profiting by their absence to try the effect of her eloquence on Lady Sophia; and the last words she heard addressed by her husband to Lord Launceston as they quitted the room together,

were, "Can you recommend me a good footman?—Frederica's man,—that tall, active-looking fellow Thomas, whom you used to patronize at Rawleighford,—is off at a moment's warning, and leaves me in a most uncomfortable plight. The man's mother is dying,—and you know one could not detain him under such circumstances."

## CHAPTER III.

Quoth she "for many years he drove
A kind of broking trade in love."

HUDIBRAS.

LADY RAWLEIGH'S errand with her friend prospered both worse and better than she expected. On her arrival at General Lee's new residence in Curzon-street, she found Lady Derenzy in the last clause of a very prolonged morning visit, and had the satisfaction of finding herself greeted by that stately piece of mechanism, with very flattering cordiality; a circumstance the more important, as her ladyship's measure of esteem was at all times beyond the powers of calculation or anticipation even of her nearest friends. She was one of those per-

sons so difficult to deal with in the commerce of social life, who leave you in a fever of tenderness one day and meet you again on the next below the freezing point of utter ungraciousness; who favour you with a note of invitation framed in all the earnestness and warmth of hospitality, and receive you with as formal a distance as if you were a poor relation, or labouring under flagrant personal disrepute. In the present instance her ladyship's augmentation of regard for the wife of her nephew arose from having heard the intimacy of her liaison with the Calder and Rochester set very maliciously blamed by Miss Harcourt, Lady Lavinia Lisle, and several ancient spinsters of her own circle.

On the occasion of Frederica's marriage Lady Derenzy had calculated that the influence of her high connexions would extricate Sir Brooke from his humdrum habits and undistinguished position in society and initiate him into the vortex of the great world; and she was proportionably disappointed on recognising Lady Rawleigh's taste for the domesticities of private life, and on discovering the odious re-

lationship into which she was likely to be forced by the indiscretion of her spendthrift brother. But on learning from the voice of rumour, or the lispings of Lord George, that the fête at Calder House was supposed to be given in her honour,—and that the Rochesters, Guéménées, and Axeters considered her the most elegant woman in London,—Sophronia was ready to forgive all her delinquencies real or implied. Backed by the admiration of such a coterie, she would not have been tempted wholly to discard her lovely niece, had Lord Launceston's marriage actually appeared among the announcements of the Morning Post;—while Frederica remained threatened with the loss of character by her intimacy with a man of so much distinction and influence as Lord Calder, her husband's haughty kinswoman considered it her duty to support her in society by an increased degree of favour and protection.

"I am very glad to leave Sophia in your hands, my dear Lady Rawleigh," said she as she rose to take leave, "for I trust your influence will induce her to coincide with General Lee's desire that

she should make a brilliant appearance at this entertainment of Lord Calder's."

"Let me trust so too!" cried Frederica as she closed the door,—having purposely forborne to detain Lady Derenzy by more than the most trivial reply of assent, and now hastening to seat herself beside her friend. "I am come for that very purpose."

"*Et tu Brute!* I had some hopes of enlisting you on my side. Now pray do not suppose, my dearest Lady Rawleigh, that I am like a whimsical woman of fashion,—courting your persuasion to do the thing I like."

"But you often assure me you are a rake at heart;—that you prefer society to solitude;—that you have a decided taste for brilliant crowds, and all the stir and excitement of the gay world."

"A *most* decided one, Frederica! But not without exceptions in the mode of their enjoyment. I am passionately fond of riding; but I have no pleasure in mounting a vicious horse,—I am—"

"*You are*—wholly incomprehensible! You

have already acknowledged to me that you detest Lady Rochester,—but nothing wherefore; and you confess by implication that you cherish an equal abhorrence of Lord Calder. Now although he is not,—has not been,—never will be,—the object of tender affection to me which one of my intimate friends—a Dynley, a Thornton, or an Erskyne—once assured you, I own I am curious to know whence arises your prejudice against so very agreeable a person;—a person whom I should be inclined to point out as endowed with all the tact, brilliancy, and high breeding, calculated to captivate your fancy."

"Were I to explain its motives I should be tempted into a long tiresome story;—valuable as the advertisements say, to no person but the owner."

"Valuable to me, if you will intrust it to my keeping."

"The Edinburgh Review assures us that people in real life never communicate their personal reminiscences; and, of course I bow to so erudite an authority."

"But fancy yourself a heroine in right

earnest!—imagine me your Norah in white dimity,—and sing or say without reserve all your grievances against poor Lord Calder. Come! —I will wind off this skein of netting silk while you are consulting the tablets of your memory."

"You fool me to the top of my bent!" replied Lady Sophia laughing. "What children we are, that a word, or a look, or a ludicrous association can make us jest upon the heaviest tragedies of life!—Here am I—on the point of recounting with a smile facts which have wrung the bitterest tears from my eyes."

"Nay! *now* you excite my interest rather than my curiosity."

"Be satisfied, Frederica,—I will disappoint neither the one nor the other. I may, however, at least be spared the infliction or endurance of such tediousness as,

> My name's Sophia!—at the Austrian court
> My sire despatches scrawled!—

I dare say my cousin Brooke profited by some long winter evening to acquaint you that I was Lord Offaley's only daughter,—that I lost my

mother in my cradle,—became a peevish self-willed child,—and grew to be a torment to myself and all belonging to me."

"By no means; he only acquainted me with a misdemeanour to which you have yourself pleaded guilty,—a certain negligence of the purity of the marble vestibules at Twickenham."

"Although I was but a girl in those days,—for Rawleigh and I were only approximated under Lord Derenzy's roof during the period of our syntax and prosody,—I was even then advanced far beyond his comprehension. I am four years older than your husband; and at sixteen, was already bewildered in a maze of fine sentiment, while he,—at twelve, had not a notion beyond taws and trap-ball. My father being aware of his own insufficiency to direct my education and control my impetuous character, turned me over to his beloved sister, Sophronia; and most assuredly no preceptor of her sex could be better endowed for the act of taming down an unquiet spirit. I am persuaded Lady Derenzy could have broken in Mazeppa's fiery courser by mere word of mouth."

"But what effect had her skill on the fierceness of Lady Sophia Rhyse?"

"More than might have been expected. Her opposition amused me beyond description. I have always been a sort of amateur in waywardness; and having been accustomed from my childhood to indulge in all the wilful vagaries of a spoiled child, it was something quite new and diverting to me to cope with a will that opposed my own. When Lady Derenzy used to direct my amazed attendant to conduct Lady Sophia to her own apartment till she came to her senses, I marked my penitence by standing still to laugh at the novelty of the invention. But it is not my intention to favour you with namby-pamby reminiscences of my white-frock days: I will convey you straight to the happy moment of my departure from the clock-work monotony of the Derenzy establishment; when, at the buoyant, sanguine, joyous age of seventeen, I was summoned to preside over my father's ambassadorial household, and to enter the lists of fashionable life."

"A charming epoch for a person of Lady Sophia Rhyse's impetuous character."

"It might have appeared so to many a girl of a far more staid and philosophical temperament; for my new position afforded every attraction which could embellish the aspect of existence. Lord Offaley had recently been appointed to the court of Tuscany; and the Continent, so long closed against the restless wanderings of our own countrymen, had not then lost its charm of nationality. Napoleon was scarcely yet settled at Elba,—the world had not forgotten the iron-terrors of his despotism,—and the English were still regarded as liberators. I found Florence,—not what it is to-day,—a sort of dilettante watering-place, a motley masquerade of second-rate English people, tolerated *faute de mieux* by the better caste of its visitors, and having destroyed all the original tone of its foreign society,—but a genuine Italian city; invested with a spell of romance which I should find it difficult to define, and which has long since been patent-axle-tree'd

from the face of the land. It was indeed, or seemed to me, '*un pezzo del ciel caduto in terra.*"

"Which being interpreted, only means that you were very young, very lovely, very sentimental,—his Excellency the Earl of Offaley's only daughter,—and that, like Elizabeth of old, whichever way you turned your eyes the people fell on their knees."

"True,—almost to the letter!—It is extraordinary what a paroxysm of sensibility my ladyship's Saxon fairness excited among the dark-haired sons and daughters of a more glowing clime; while it is not at all extraordinary that my ladyship's head should have been rendered somewhat dizzy by such an exuberance of incense. But there is one word of your arraignment, Frederica mia, which grates on my ear,—'sentimental!'—Is it not an odious thing that we never allow ourselves to allude to the natural impulses of the heart, unless in a tone of mockery?—What is there to deride in the sensibility of boy and girlhood?—Youth is as inevitably connected with such emotions as spring with flowers and

sunshine;—and although we might despise the *man*—the full-grown,—full-minded,—dry,—hard,—rational,—debating,—legislating,—calculating man, who preferred a trumpery violet to an oak tree capable of being sold at so much per foot,—surely we may allow a moment—(the world will take care that it does not last too long)—for the indulgence of natural feelings, and the unchecked delusions of the soul?"

"You are the last person in the world," cried Lady Rawleigh, "from whom I should have expected a tirade in praise of sensibility."

"Because the world,—I thank its tender mercies,—has clad me in complete steel against any relapse of the disorder.—Besides it is a distemper of extreme youth, and would as ill-become me now as the chincough. Still, although I am not at all ashamed to avow that I have *passé par là*, do not imagine, my gentle coz., that I ever condescended to perform the part of a Lydia Languish, or to amuse myself with sighing away my sorrows on the banks of the Arno. I only wish to forewarn you that I entered upon life unguarded by any precocious

philosophy;—that I was just as well inclined to believe that 'words were things,'—that those who spoke me fairly meant me kindly,—that there was warmth in the sunshine and safety on the wave,—as any other young lady of my age, who is subjected to hear herself assured, at all hours, in all languages, that she is an angel; and to find her every action and thought regarded with admiration by a doating father. I was neither quite a fool nor quite an ignoramus, it is true; but my studies at Twickenham had been wholly literary,—I knew nothing of the world, and fancied I knew wonders;—in short, my dear Frederica, I was as promising a subject for a dupe, as Moses Primrose or Wilhelm Meister."

"But surely you were not left wholly to your own guidance;—surely you were not allowed at 'sweet seventeen' to do the honours of the embassy?"

"Not precisely.—There was a Mrs. Mansel, a sort of demi-semi dame de compagnie, the widow of an officer, who, at my father's desire, had accompanied me from England; and who, by Lady Derenzy's discernment had been se-

lected for the office from her gentle inanity of mind and body, in order to prevent her from becoming a dangerous companion—not to me—but to my father. And yet Lord Offaley, as you have probably heard, was a man of highly cultivated mind, absorbed by his public duties and abstruse studies, who was very unlikely to have fallen in love with any thing less ethereal than Carlo Dolce's representation of La Poesia;—and who did not even apply his observation to sublunary things sufficiently to perceive that his daughter was full fathom-five in love,—and that Mrs. Mansel was looking on with as vague and incurious an eye as if she had been only a painted emblem of a duenna!"

"In love!" reiterated Frederica. "*Now* your narrative begins indeed to overstep the modesty of the 'white-frock days.' The romance of your history began betimes."—

"So it should ever do, that it may end before the commencement of the matter-of-fact business of life. But guess, Frederica,—and save me the labour of an attempt at a blush,—guess the name of its hero?"

"How can I possibly conjecture by what conjunction of

Syllables that breathe of the sweet south,

your Tuscan adorer was distinguished;—Borghese, Belgiojoso, Bretadignelli—."

"Pshaw!—do you really suppose me so missish as to be captivated by nothing beneath a principality?—No,—with all the charm that Italy assumed in my eyes, it was the land, and not the dwellers on it, which moved my predilection. No woman of feeling and delicacy, admitted as I was behind the curtain of the ménage in their villas and palaces, would endure the thought of similar domestication."

"I have always heard that there was a great deal of penury and filth hid under the superficial splendour of those foreign magnats," said the literal Frederica.

"Mental penury, and moral filth,—the worst of social evils! But not to digress into a dissertation on the manners and customs of the Italians, or rather to return to my own which are of course far more important in my eyes, know that even then I held the opinion I have

never since resigned, that a well-educated English gentleman is the most refined and accomplished of the male creation.—This doctrine, Frederica, is general and comprehensive:—its peculiar example was embodied in the person of your friend—"

"Lord Calder!" exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, her eyes sparkling with detection of the mystery. "I thought so!"

"Not quite, but *à peu près!*—I should have said your friend's friend—his *double*—"

"Not that odious, hypocritical Mr. Vaux!" again interrupted Frederica.

"Not the hypocritical Mr. Vaux, certainly, but his precursor;—the boy who was father to the man!—The stripling of five-and-twenty and the polished man of the world at forty-and-one, are two very different beings."

"Not in every instance, I trust," observed Frederica, in a low tone. "I should grieve to think that sixteen years hence Rawleigh would become so strangely altered."

"Brooke Rawleigh at forty—fifty—a hundred-and-one if you please, will always remain the same excellent straight-forward personage

he is to-day;—but *he* runs no danger of becoming a man of the world! When Mr. Vaux visited Florence, he had just left Oxford, having distinguished himself sufficiently to render his name known to my father,—and was proceeding on the grand tour under the combined advantages of a good person, good abilities, good fortune, and good introductions; but the charms he soon discovered in Florence, or, to speak it without affectation, in the smiles of Lady Sophia Rhyse, and the society of Lord Offaley, induced him to anchor himself in the Arno for the remainder of the winter. To my father, indeed, he was a great acquisition. Our secretary was a piece of estimable diplomatic lumber;—a thing wound up to go through its accustomed duties without demur or delay, or an idea of its own; and our attachés were a tribe of school-boy honourables, who fortunately made their way too well in the households of the foreign magnats we were talking of, to inflict their nothingness upon ours. Mr. Vaux, meanwhile, was unexceptionable in his address,—a young man of cultivated mind and manners;—graceful,

insinuating, and although courted in the best society of the place, always to be found at the embassy."

"Or as you observed just now—(to speak it without affectation)—always at the feet of Lady Sophia Rhyse."

"Like other anticipators, you invariably overshoot the mark!—He was *not* at my feet,—and was even especially cautious not to place himself there; but he was constantly by my side, and had every excuse for the propinquity; being incessantly invited by my father,—incessantly welcomed by myself. Mrs. Mansel was my constant companion; but her presence, whether ghostly or bodily, formed no restraint on our intercourse. In my box at the Opera she sat with her glassy eyes riveted on the 104th representation of the Tancredi, with the same vague immobility it had elicited on its first night; and in our walks and drives never could I perceive that she saw or heard more of our proceedings than the idle wind which passed us by. Meanwhile, those proceedings were fraught with peril to one at least of the party.

Frederick Vaux and I were sharing together that bewildering dream of first attachment which leaves the remainder of life a blank. Without distinctly uttering the words 'I love,' there was nothing *but* love in all our arguments, —our meetings and parting,—our disagreements and reconciliations,—our thoughts and looks."

"And what then prevented the utterance of that 'open Sesame' of the heart, which would have consecrated such looks and thoughts?"

"At that period I never paused to inquire. I knew that after the fashion of English woo-ings, marriage is preceded by courtship,—court-ship by an unacknowledged probation of love; —and I found its doubts and fears and sub-limities far too delightful to be anxious for the abridgment of this first stage of exquisite pur-gatory; or, to own the truth, I never reflected at all on the subject. In Vaux's absence, I thought only of the moment of meeting him again; and when he *was* again by my side, I knew and felt nothing but that I was the hap-piest creature in the world!—No! it is not in

words to define a more exclusive devotion than mine to that selfish, heartless man!"

Lady Sophia paused for a moment, as if absorbed by her own recollections; but on perceiving an air of sympathy in Lady Rawleigh's countenance, she suddenly resumed her natural animation.

"Well, Frederica,—not to waste too much pathos on a sterile subject,—this same delightful winter passed rapidly away; my father, whose habits were those of the most splendid profusion, upheld the dignity of the embassy by a series of princely entertainments, at which Vaux was considered less as a guest than as a child of the house; and although I experienced the contrariety of opening our weekly ball with some man of higher distinction, I was sure to find him at the breakfast-table on the following morning, discussing Greek epigrams with Lord Offaley till poor Mansel's eyes expanded beyond the dimensions of the teacups over which she was presiding. And yet the winter expired without any better understanding among

us.—Instead of departing for Rome and Naples, as he had originally projected, Mr. Vaux satisfied himself with a six weeks' visit to the baths at Lucca, during which period a miserable vacuum was perceptible to the mind of his excellency, and the heart of his excellency's daughter; and when on his return he was invited to pass the autumn at our delicious casino, I know not which appeared the happiest of the three. I will spare you, however, the twilight and the moonlight, the Arno, the orange-blossoms, the vintage, and all the poeticisms of the case; and acknowledge that when we settled once more in the city for the winter months, even I had begun to think it strange that Mr. Vaux was not yet my declared lover."

"Perhaps his circumstances—"

"Exactly so!—I had somehow or other discovered that his estate amounted to no more than fifteen hundred a-year;—my father's, I knew, was estimated at as many thousands;—and in my ignorance of the world, I settled it with myself that Vaux had not courage to ten-

der so poor a pittance to the heiress of Lord Offaley. From that moment my pride repressed the professions of disinterested unworldliness I had been accustomed to utter in his presence; —I thought every declaration of humility appeared like meeting his scruples half way. Sometimes, indeed, he seemed on the point of overcoming them without any such encouragement; when just as my hour of happiness was approaching, the fates decreed that a Lord Ellersby and a Mr. Dynley should make their entrance on the scene."

"The present Lord Lawford, and Lady Barbara's husband?"

"Precisely!—Lord Ellersby was a good-natured fashionable young man, who travelled to get rid of himself or his time, and thought both one and the other as well bestowed on the ambassador's daughter as on the Venus of the Tribune; while Mr. Dynley, as a species of gentlemanly toady, fancied he escaped the charge of hanging on and tuft-hunting, because he concealed his meanness under a braggadocio air, and had courage to say insolent things

to the man whose table and carriage he laid under contribution. He was, in fact, the same cynical, overbearing, supercilious person you see him now; but unfortunately he had another qualification,—he was Vaux's Oxford and Eton friend!—From the first day of his appearance at the embassy, where by the way he was warmly welcomed in this latter capacity by my father, I conceived an insurmountable prejudice against him. Vaux, in our *villeggiatura* season, had taught me German,—in return for which I bestowed the name of Mephistophiles on his bosom friend; a piece of flippancy which, with the genuine treachery of his sex he communicated to Dynley, and our dislike became reciprocal. Had Rawleigh a Pylades, Frederica?—if so, you are probably aware of the danger of making an enemy of one's lover's bosom friend."

"Mrs. Martha Derenzy was Sir Brooke's Patroclus," said her companion; "and we began, and have continued a system of mutual regard."

"Poor old soul!—there is no more malice in *her* bosom than in a buttered muffin."

"I can imagine, however, that there was not a similar deficiency in the heart of that hideous Mr. Dynley."

"And yet, with all his courteous hatred of me, he could not manage to prevent Lord Ellersby from—but hark!—I hear General Lee's step in the other room.—You must suspend your curiosity till to-morrow."

"Not if you will come and take a drive with me to Colvile's."

"You know we are engaged to ride together at five; and I do not like to leave the General alone for so many hours."

Frederica recollected with regret her former ungenerous suspicions on that very point.

"But you will promise me the remainder of your Life and Times during our ride?"

"On no account! I do not like your brother half well enough to improve his young mind at my own expense. But if you will let me off the riding party, for which I am not quite in spirits,

I will call for you this evening when the general goes to his club;—I have the Duke of Draxfield's box for Drury-lane; and we will finish our commérage in a tête-à-tête. Where are you going to-night?"

"Only to the Guéménées;—we can be home to dress by eleven, which will suit me perfectly."

## CHAPTER IV.

Heaven, when it strives to polish all it can
Its last best work, but forms a softer man;
Picks from each sex to make the favourite blest,
Your love of pleasure, our desire of rest;
Blends in exception to all general rules,
Your taste for follies, with our scorn of fools;
Reserve with frankness, art with truth allied,—
Courage with softness, modesty with pride,
Fixed principles with fancy ever new.—

POPE.

"I HAVE been quite tired out this morning by Lexley and his legislative crew;" observed Sir Brooke Rawleigh, as he pledged Frederica in a glass of sherry soon after the commencement of dinner. "He is such an unmerciful magnifier of atoms, such an umpire of the frogs and mice, such an emphasizer upon nothings,

*that one loses one's time and patience in his service. I think I shall skip the house to-night, and pass a quiet evening with you in Charles-street.*"

"You offer me a strong temptation to break through my engagements," replied his wife reddening to the temples: "but I have promised to accompany Lady Sophia to the play. She is to call for me with the General about eight. Perhaps," continued Frederica, with a conscious look, for she really wished to enjoy a tête-à-tête with her friend; "perhaps you would like to accompany us?—We have the Duke of Draxfield's box."

But Sir Brooke, vexed to find his little domestic project thus provokingly forestalled, now took it into his head to be affronted that the scheme was only thus casually unfolded to him. "I am obliged to you," he replied, somewhat drily, "but I should think that General Lee, Lady Sophia, and yourself, like John Gilpin's family—'would fill the chaise;'—and it would not suit me like the doughty draper to 'ride a-horseback after ye.'"

"But you could find your way to us," said Lady Rawleigh, coldly.

"No!—on the whole it would suit me better to find my way to the Alfred. I am a week in arrear with the newspapers;—and from Albemarle-street I can look in for the close of the debate, and save my character."

"As you please.—There is nothing very promising at Drury-lane; and you might possibly have been bored."

"Who have you of your party?" inquired Sir Brooke, carelessly helping himself to a cutlet, although his plate was already fully supplied.

"Not a soul!—Lady Sophia and I have made an agreement to be quite alone, that we may decide the mighty matter of our dresses for Calder House."

Sir Brooke now appeared more at his ease, and despatched his double portion of cutlets without much effort. Before dessert was placed on the table, Lady Sophia was announced to be in waiting; and Frederica in her simple morning dress was immediately handed to the carriage by her husband. After depositing

General Lee at his club, they proceeded to the theatre; and were no sooner comfortably installed in their arm-chair, beyond reach of interruption from the unmeaning melo-drama which was proceeding on the stage, than Lady Rawleigh claimed the promise of her friend to complete her narrative.

"'*Shall* I go on?' as Yorick says. *Do* you know that the routine of dinner and dressing have reduced me to such a conventionalized mood, that I am positively ashamed of my own egotism in commencing the task. Who, in their sober senses, can suppose their personal reminiscences interesting to any other living being?"—

"How!—You who lived for years within chime of the Twickenham ring of bells concerning 'Strawberry Horace,' can you be ignorant of Walpole's aphorism, that every man who will take the trouble of describing in simple language the scenes of which he has been a spectator, can afford an instructive and amusing narrative?"

"A *man*, perhaps,—whose life is animated

by action!—But a woman's existence consists in her feelings,—and mere feelings are too individual and too selfish to excite much sympathy. Between yours and mine, however, my dear Frederica, there is sufficient analogy to bespeak some interest; and I will therefore trust to your probity that you have not, *par complaisance*, invited me into details which you do not care to hear.—Where was I?—In much love, and much perplexity, if I recollect."—

"You had brought Mr. Dynley and Lord Ellersby to Florence; and had given me reason to prognosticate an adorer in the one and enemy in the other."

"Well recollected, Fred.!—you really encourage me to proceed:—you were not half so nearly asleep this morning as I conjectured."

"Nor *you* so much in earnest!—for I was induced to believe your attachment to Mr. Vaux a serious affair;—and yet you now allude to it with levity!"

"Do I?" said Lady Sophia, with an irrepressible shudder. "Then my words belie my feelings; for during ten long desolate years

that man and his shallow treachery preyed upon my heart! I cannot tell you, Frederica, with what surprise, what bewilderment, what gradually-awakening anguish, I perceived how pointedly he withdrew his attentions in order to make way for those of Lord Ellersby, and how plainly he evinced his desire that I should become the wife of another!—I had no advisers;—Mrs. Mansel was a goose;—my father would probably have followed up my confidences on such a subject by offering to countersign Mr. Vaux's passport for the pursuance of his southern tour; and young as I was, I should have shrunk from taking counsel with the married women by whom I was surrounded, whose practice afforded so vile a sample of their principles. Clearsighted enough in their case, the conduct of Mr. Vaux fairly baffled my penetration. I was convinced that previous to Dynley's arrival the sincerity of his attachment had equalled its tenderness; and I now began to imagine that the libertine example of his friend alone disposed him against the restraints of a married life. Sometimes, too, I fancied that the deli-

cacy of his scruples forbade him to interpose his personal influence between the brilliant prospects afforded me by an union with Lord Ellersby."

"You believed him, in short, as honest and disinterested as yourself."—

"Disinterested I truly was,—but in point of honesty, I can say little in my own praise; for the result of my cogitations was a resolution—a genuine feminine resolution—to quicken the pulse of Vaux's diminished passion by a little jealousy. Having satisfied my conscience by a self-assurance that the noble tourist was afflicted with a measure of sensibility exactly commensurate with that of a Colchester oyster, and that he devoted his homage to me only because I happened to be the finest lady in Florence, I commenced a violent flirtation with him; and promoted him to all the distinctions of companionship in riding, dancing, singing, and conversing, which I had formerly bestowed on the recreant scholar of the artful Dynley. *Je n'y gagnois pas!*—Lord Lawford is your country neighbour, and you can therefore appreciate his

merits as a partner and a companion; and Frederick, instead of being excited to any thing like a jealous rivalship, retreated further and further from the scene of action. *I* yawned with my new lover in the foreground, while *he* sighed ostentatiously in the distance."

"And Dynley?"

"—Sneered to his heart's content at all three! —Nor was this the worst part of the affair. The violent flirtation was as miscalculated as it was unfeeling on my own part;—I ought not to have done more than coquet with my automaton of a lover; by overacting my manœuvre, I rendered it worse than useless. Poor Lord Ellersby, deceived by the encouragement of my smiles, hastened to offer his proposals to my father; and one fine morning when I went to make my daily salutations to Lord Offaley, I found him in his library, making calculations on the back of a letter, and looking at once pleased and mortified. He congratulated me on having secured so respectable and brilliant a position as that of Countess of Lawford; even while an air of vexation clouded his brow at the

prospect of consigning his darling child to the arms of a blockhead!"

"Lord Offaley did not then so much as revert to the possibility of rejection?"—

"How should he?—He had seen me welcome with the utmost courtesy those fulsome attentions which I now assured him were revolting to me:—had seen me court the declaration I was now half inclined to resent as an insult."

"And of course reproached you with your previous hypocrisy?"

"No!—my dear father could see or imagine no fault in *his* daughter half so heinous. He conceived my inconsistency to arise at worst from the inherent caprice of my sex; and as such, reproved it with all the forbearing gentleness of his nature. Having listened with patience to my request that he would immediately and definitively decline the overtures of my unfortunate dupe, he added, 'The circumstances being now at an end, Sophy, which could afford undue importance in your eyes to such a piece of intelligence,—since you have absolutely refused an offer which would have secured your

future independence,—I think it right, my dear child, to apprize you that my brother necessarily inherits, with my title, all my entailed estates; —that my expenses through life have unfortunately equalled my income; and that,—unless a prolongation of my appointment here should enable me to appropriate a fund to your future benefit, your mother's fortune of ten thousand pounds is all I shall be able to bequeath you. Let not, however, this limited portion influence your views in the choice of an alliance. Should I die to-morrow, my dearest Sophia would not be left destitute: — my sister Derenzy has solemnly engaged to afford her the protection of a comfortable home."

"Such, then, after all, was the paltry—the degrading motive of Mr. Vaux's reserve!"

"Alas! alas! Frederica!—judge what tears of bitterness enlightenment on such a point must have wrung from my heart!—I grieve to recollect that my sudden burst of sorrow was attributed by my poor father to displeasure at his thoughtless improvidence, rather than to a painful sense of my own humiliation; nor could

I undeceive him by a frank representation of the conflict in my heart. My simple assurances sufficed to remove his unpleasant impression,—for persons of a generous mind are always susceptible of a generous interpretation of the views of others; but as I was leaving the room to conceal in solitude my wounded feelings and swollen eyes, he abruptly recalled me. "One more word on this unsatisfactory subject, Sophia," said he, "before we dismiss it for ever. I trust I have no reason for apprehending that any other attachment—that your intimacy with Mr. Vaux,—has influenced your determination against Lord Ellersby?"

"My dear father," I replied, evasively and with a beating heart, "surely you must have noticed that since his lordship's arrival Mr. Vaux has been wholly engrossed by his old friend, Mr. Dynley;—that of all the young men who frequent the embassy, no one pays me so little attention; and that his attraction to this house lies exclusively in your society and conversation?"

"So I have always thought, or I should have

been more scrupulous in encouraging him by such frequent invitations," said Lord Offaley, tranquilly resuming his official pen. "Mr. Vaux is a young man of great abilities; and may, if he chooses, win his way to some distinction. But were his birth and fortune thrice as attractive as those of poor Ellersby, I should not experience the slightest hesitation in addressing to him the refusal I am at this moment about to write. Vaux is one of the last men in the world to whom I would confide the happiness of a beloved child—Frederica!—what do I deserve for having trifled with the credulity of so good—so kind a father?"

"I know not what punishment to award you; but I conceive that a penance for your sins was very amply supplied in the infatuation of your attachment."

"You are right!—Surrounded by all that the world calls prosperity,—by a splendid establishment, brilliant position, universal favour, and above all by the doting tenderness of Lord Offaley, my life was in reality a life of penance. I was beginning to feel debased in my own

eyes;—I was beginning to experience that indescribable self-recoil of unrequited affection, which turns the springs of nature from milk to gall, and eats into the innermost depths of a repining heart. Amid all the devoted admirers by which my steps were followed, I saw but the one missing truant; amid all the conflicting pleasures and interests of life, I recognised only those which involved the destiny of Frederick,—of that Frederick by whom I was tacitly rejected."

"And Lord Ellersby?"

"—Quitted Florence on the following day, with a justly resentful notion that he had been exceedingly ill-used. His absence, as you may imagine, was a considerable relief to my feelings, and the more so that it necessitated Mr. Dynley's departure. Already I began to flatter myself that perhaps old times might be renewed,—that Vaux, estranged from his evil influence and evil example, might renounce his worldly wisdom in my favour; but, alas!—I soon recognised my error. They went not alone;—Frederick had been persuaded to join

their journey to Naples;—and I had the satisfaction of knowing, in my deserted and desolate solitude, that two at least of the party would enliven their tour by railing against the caprice, and insolence, and all the other faults, both real and imaginary, of the presumptuous Lady Sophia Rhyse."

"And this vexation you had to undergo unsupported by the counsels or sympathy of a single friend!"

"I cannot boast that my fortitude sustained the trial with very exemplary patience. I became peevish and capricious in good earnest; Mrs. Mansel was secretly convinced that my temper was utterly ruined; and my father openly confessed his apprehensions that my health was gone for ever. I have little doubt that my fair rivals of Florence formed the same opinion touching my beauty, although it was too carefully guarded to reach my ears;—for to say the truth I was seriously ill, and my feebleness and wasted figure bore witness to the fact. Had I fallen in love and out of health in England, I should of course have been de-

spatched to Italy for death or recovery;—in Italy, they could recommend me nothing better than "to try my natal air;" or, in other words, return to England, and rescue the physician of the Embassy from the tedious duty of watching over my slow extinction. To England, in short, we came; and had it not been for the morbid and perverse tenacity with which young ladies of eighteen cling to what is called a first attachment, even I might have learned to reconcile my admiration for the character of a British gentleman, with a discovery that Mr. Vaux presented by no means so exclusive a personal copy of the Apollo animated by the philosophy of Bacon, and the wit of Swift, as I had taught myself to fancy. In the elevated society to which I was now introduced by my father's rank and popularity, I met with half-a-dozen, —with twenty men,—far more deserving my regard by their talents and accomplishments, and in more than one instance by their preference to myself. But I was obstinately bent on being a fool;—piqued myself on proving as constant as Juliet;—and was almost disap-

pointed to find, that instead of pining away into the tomb of all the Offaleys, I gradually recovered my appetite,—rest,—good-looks,—all but my pristine indifference: till my father satisfied to see his dear Sophia resume her health and cheerfulness, quite forgave her obstinacy in refusing two or three as auspicious alliances as ever courted the caprice of a coquette."

"I have heard that, among others, Lord Axeter and the Duke of Whitehaven were at one time at your feet."

"I recognise Lady Derenzy's gossipping genius in the statement!—But *n'importe!*—I did not allow them to remain there long."

"And how long did you linger in this wonderfully efficacious 'natal air?'"

"A year—or more,—long enough to be heartily tired of it and of myself. My father, believing that my indisposition must have arisen from the climate of Tuscany, had sent in his resignation soon after our arrival in England; but not, as it turned out, to his own disadvantage. It chanced that during our stay in the land of

parliaments and pugilism, a molten calf of our own kindred was set up in Downing-street, who was sufficiently obliging to nominate his cousin, the Earl of Offaley, to the Austrian mission; and when we quitted England again, it was to exchange the banks of the Arno for those of the Danube. Any prospect of novelty delighted me; but guess what were my feelings when, as we were dining, a few nights previous to our departure, with the foreign secretary, a young Bohemian nobleman invited to meet us as being just arrived from Vienna, observed 'And you will find several of your own countrymen settled there for the winter; among others a Milor Dinli, and a Milor Vows.'"

"Mr. Dynley, and Mr. Vaux?"

"'Exactly!—Mr. Dynley has arranged himself in the ménage of my relative Prince Zibrinczki,—or of Madame son épouse, which is nearly the same thing.'

"'That ugly dog!—I should have thought him the last [redacted] on earth to captivate a woman of gallantry,' said our official cousin.

"'Ah!' cried the young Bohemian, laugh-

ing, 'it is so difficult for men to judge the attractions of their own sex! Dinli is *très bizarre,—ce qu'on appelle en Angleterre "ott"—"umoriste,"*—and the princess likes him either for his satirical originality,—or as some ladies choose their lapdogs,—for his hideousness.'

"'And his friend?—young Vaux, I grant you is a goodlooking fellow; and quite calculated for conquest. Surely prince, you must mean Mr. Vaux, as the *héros à bonnes fortunes?*' persisted my lord the secretary.'

"'Ah—no!—on the contrary, Milor Vows is any thing but a lady-killer—quite an anchorite,—a philosopher by comparison. He lives indeed, with the Zibrinczkis as familiarly as his friend; for it appears *his* business in the drama to divert the prince's attention by prosing about English horses and English agriculture, (my purblind cousin's darling hobbies)—while Dinli spouts Rousseau with Madame la princesse."

"Here was a noble occupation for the idol of my heart!—At least it gave me the pleasure of despising him: and when we arrived at our

splendid hotel on the Wohlgraben, and ascertained the exact accuracy of the intelligence I had received respecting these estimable gentlemen, it imparted to my heart all the courage I wanted, in order to receive them at the embassy with the most repellent reserve. To Dynley, I was as chilling as a grand duchess; to his friend I was still worse,—easily and calmly contemptuous. It was now *my* turn to triumph."

"And I trust you did not allow it to escape unimproved, or you were less than true to the cause of your sex!" cried Frederica.

"Alas!—I was only *too* true to its weakness. I so absurdly exaggerated my part, and managed to overwhelm the offender by such an excess of scornful insolence, that I not only drew down the reprehension of my father for my want of courtesy towards one of his favourite guests, but enlisted my own sympathy in his behalf. Many persons of the high society of Vienna, who had waited for my example to form their opinion of my two countrymen, and who conceived from my demeanour towards

Mr. Vaux that he was little better than an adventurer, now hastened to emulate my tone of disdain; and we had not been established many weeks, before his position, which was so flattering and agreeable previous to my inopportune arrival, became wholly reversed. He found himself travelling to Coventry by easy stages; and seemed to relish the journey as little as possible."

"Delightful!—just as it should be!"

"Delightful—but just as it ought not to have been for the furtherance of my own interests. By using the man ill and following up a system of petty revenge, I placed myself in the wrong, and gave him an undue advantage. And this would have been of trifling importance had I really acquired the indifference of which I flattered myself; but having absolutely succeeded in injuring Frederick Vaux, and in reducing him below his just level in the opinion of society, I discovered by my self-upbraiding and sympathy with his mortification,—that I was nearly as much in love as ever!"

"At least I trust you did not allow the traitor to participate in your discovery?"

"And do you suppose, my very dearest Lady Rawleigh, that any woman on earth, under such circumstances, is capable of concealing them from the person most interested to detect her weakness?—At least I flattered myself that my secret was safe; that my demeanour to Vaux and Dynley was unexceptionable, and only indicative of my contempt of their manœuvres in the Zibrinczki ménage;—and I pursued my routine of carnival gaieties,—of balls,—masquerades,—carousels,—sledge-parties,—tableaux, and proverbs,—with the most popular grace and dignity, and a persuasion that the treacherous Frederick rated himself as the last person in Vienna in the estimation of the ambassador's daughter. But the enemy had better intelligence!—He soon discovered that his happiness was indispensable to my own: and by assuming the misanthropic despondency of an ill-used and miserable man, contrived to establish himself on more than his former footing of favour at the embassy."

"And Dynley?—did he sanction such a relapse on the part of his friend?"

"It never would have occurred, but that my enemy had been recalled to England by the sudden death of the uncle from whom he inherits his fortune. Vainly did Princess Zibrinczki implore him to lessen the agony of their eternal separation by the delay of a few months—a few weeks—a few days. The connexion had been one of mere selfish convenience on his part; and now that the necessity was over, he took no further pains to disguise the fact. On the Continent, people have more politeness even in their perfidies;—men who are not ashamed to be traitors, would blush to exhibit themselves as brutes; and such was the indignation excited in the best circles of Vienna by the conduct of Milor Dinli to the Princess, that his friend (who by the way he discarded, on his accession of fortune, almost as cavalierly as his ladye-love) would certainly have found it necessary to take his leave of that stage, had he not found shelter under the renewed protection of the infatuated Sophia Rhyse, and in the

most vehement and vociferous disavowal of his quondam protector. He amused himself in sharing the indignation and vows of vengeance of the Zibrinczki, and the smiles and sighs of Lord Offaley's daughter."

"I cannot but fancy you are calumniating yourself," cried Frederica. "It seems to me impossible that at any period of your life you should have been so deficient in proper spirit."

"So fully can I enter into your contempt of my weakness," continued Lady Sophia, "that I dare not and will not hint to you the length of time my blindness was destined to endure. I have some consolation in hoping that from first to last my infatuation remained unsuspected by the world in general. My father imagined my determined predilection for a single life to proceed from some girlish partiality contracted at Twickenham; and my Vienna friends attributed my refusal of several distinguished nobles of the Austrian court to the narrow prejudices of my heretic condition. One person, however —one only person proved more discriminating! General Lee—the faithful and beloved friend of

my father;—who had visited us at Florence, and already directed his attention to Vaux's proceedings and my own folly, was disgusted when the chances of a summer tour brought him to our residence at Neudorf to find the successful plotter re-established among us at Vienna. From my earliest childhood he had been my fervent and partial friend, and was still much too affectionately disposed towards me to open my father's eyes on the subject;—but to myself he spoke without reserve."

"'Do not fancy yourself a match, dearest Sophy,' said he, to the child of his old friend, 'for the cold-blooded worldliness of yonder villain. He is deceiving you into a reliance on his delicacy and sensibility, only because he finds himself elevated in the world by his connexion with you and yours; you are lavishing the rich treasure of your affections on an ungrateful egotist.'

"But alas! even these judicious warnings were given in vain—I still beheld in Vaux the only object on earth worthy my interest,—when a few months after the departure of General Lee,

an event—a domestic event occurred.—But pardon me, dearest Lady Rawleigh; I have not yet attained sufficient courage to talk of my father's death as of the ordinary events of life! Suffice it that I lost him—that I was left to the moderate inheritance he had announced—that Horatio Rhyse's father, an Irish squire, encumbered with debts and children, became Earl of Offaley—and myself, a repining inmate of that most odious mansion at Twickenham."

"Do not distress yourself by entering further into those details," said Frederica soothingly, when she perceived that her companion was far more agitated than she cared to avow. "Another time—"

"No!—I have nearly concluded—one more plunge, and the worst will be over. Lady Derenzy was already a widow when I returned to her roof; and I soon found reason to acknowledge how much I had been formerly obliged to her meek lord's participation in her restless despotism, and to the influence of my father's importance upon her mind. She was now a thousand-fold more frivolous and vexatious

than ever;—lived in a perpetual ferment of finesse for my matrimonial advancement; and passed her days in elegizing the forfeited honours of the Earldom of Lawford and Elvington Park, and divers other landed estates and landed proprietors, which might have antecedently made my own;—as well as in devising further schemes of hymeneal speculation. I do assure you,—Frederica, that the dragons, bonzes, and other figurative monsters assembled in the Twickenham china gallery, are lovely in comparison with the collection of human horrors tendered by Lady Derenzy to my choice. A stranger viewing the masculine moiety of her chosen set, might have supposed her a modern Circe exercising her spells over a herd of brutes."

"I scarcely dare connect any further inquiry with the name of Mr. Vaux?" hesitated Lady Rawleigh.

"Nor did I.—Nor was there any occasion for the effort. Having accurately investigated the state of my father's affairs, and ascertained that common rumour had rightly prognosticated the

limited extent of my inheritance, he departed in quest of some more wealthy alliance or auspicious friendship; and when next I saw this former object of my idolatry (it was not however till five years after I became an orphan) Mr. Vaux was enacting the part of double to Lord Calder, and of lover to Lord Calder's licentious sister! Time, however, and the minute martyrdom of daily subservience to the whims of my arbitrary aunt had somewhat tamed down my susceptibility; and I met him at that period with all the real indifference I had formerly attempted to assume. I doubt whether he was conscious of the change,—or even of my presence or existence:—a mere Lady Sophia with ten thousand pounds was to him as unimportant as the chair on which she was seated."

"And General Lee?" said Frederica.—"You seem to hesitate in bringing him back upon the scene."

"I ought not,—for he was my only surviving friend. From the moment of my arrival in England he attached himself to Lady Deremy's

society, watched over my happiness, soothed all my petty mortifications; and only waited to ascertain that my paltry provision repelled the ardour of my former admirers, and anticipated the pretensions of new ones, to offer me his hand. I wish I could do justice to the noble frankness of his dealings towards me. He told me without reserve that had his property been sufficiently at his disposal to secure the independence of the daughter of his friend without degrading her by an alliance with a decrepit veteran, he would have joyfully embraced the alternative, and bestowed on me the means of happiness with the man of my choice. 'Yes, Sophy,'—said he,—'although it would have grieved me to the very heart's core to see you reward the indelicate double-dealing of a wretch like Vaux, I would have borne it in preference to the apprehension that you bestow yourself on me with repugnance. But, alas!—it is a jointure and not a dowry I am enabled to offer you. I do not ask you to love me, or to regard me with warmer interest than you have always evinced towards your father's friend;—but if a

home secure from the vexatious tyranny of Lady Derenzy,—if an indulgent and assiduous protector afford any attraction to you,—accept them, my dear child, accept them; and imagine you have found in old Randolph Lee the revival of your father's tenderness.' "

## CHAPTER V.

Since there are persons who complain
There's too much satire in my vein,
That I am often found exceeding
The rules of raillery and breeding,—
With too much freedom treat my betters,
Not sparing even men of letters;
Ye, who are skill'd in lawyer's lore,
What's your advice?—Shall I give o'er,
Nor even fools or knaves expose,
In biting verse or slumb'rous prose;—
And to avoid all future ill,
In my scrutoire lock up my quill?

DEAN SWIFT.

"It was in a moment of domestic irritation proceeding from my aunt's paltry manœuvres," continued Lady Sophia, attempting to rally her spirits, "that this explanation afforded me the prospect of release. Do not, however, imagine that the feeling and generosity of Lee

were rewarded by my acceptance of his hand solely from interested motives;—I solemnly protest to you, Frederica, that had one gleam of my former infatuated attachment lingered in my heart, or had I been unable to pronounce with perfect sincerity my vows of love and obedience, I would have clung to the chains of my importunate bondage sooner than become his wife. But he was satisfied with my candid explanation of the state of my feelings,—an explanation which his own acute discernment had fully forestalled. I did not disguise from him that my heart had been stung into the bitterness of disappointed affection,—that my mind was harassed by the humiliation of mortified vanity,—that I was out of love with my species and with myself;—but I promised to reward his generosity in accepting for his companion a peevish and rejected misanthrope, by attempting to render myself more worthy his regard. Fortunately he had confidence in the honesty of his old friend's daughter:

> He trusted to the blood of Loredano
> Warm in my heart;

and satisfied all Lady Derenzy's apprehensions of having to endure the company of her indigent niece as a perpetual burthen, by endowing me with settlements to the utmost amount his tenure of an entailed property would admit."

"And thus you were restored to liberty and happiness!" cried Frederica. "But I do not understand by what method of co-operation in Vaux's villany, Lord Calder and his sister became so abhorrent to your feelings?"

"Ay! I forgot, or tried to evade the necessity, of unveiling one of the most grievous gangrenes of a wounded heart. Know, dearest Frederica, that in the season of my unlimited trust in Mr. Vaux, when we were all but betrothed lovers, or rather when we were affectionate and confidential friends, I had exchanged a thousand trifles with him. Either in ignorance of the world or defiance of its misinterpretation, I gave him books, antiques, and even the worst and most unadvised pledge of a woman's tenderness,—a ring bearing my initials and a lock of hair. I will not recur to the protestations of good faith and gratitude with

which it was originally received; but you will readily believe that when I beheld it on all occasions ostentatiously displayed on the finger of Lady Rochester, I grew sufficiently indignant. Judge, however, what were my feelings on discovering that every idle particular of the *belle passion* entertained by Lady Sophia Rhyse for a man who had never vouchsafed her the least assurance of preference, or exhibited towards her more than the courtesies of an ordinary acquaintance, had not only been recounted for her diversion, but that she amused herself by repeating the scandalous tale in all companies, with the most wicked exaggerations and groundless inferences."

"Shameful!—shameful to both parties; but in Lady Rochester unfemininely false to the cause of her sex."

"Calder's offence, however, although of a complexion equally dark, I have never definitively traced home. It was, indeed, while living inhabits of the most confidential friendship with his lordship,—then, as now, avowedly the most deliberate and practised libertine of our times,—

that Vaux, shortly after my marriage, hazarded those declarations of attachment, and explanations of his former conduct, which were not necessary to raise my detestation to the highest pitch. Think, my dearest Lady Rawleigh, think of the humiliation of receiving a similar insult from a man once fondly loved;—of being told that the motives of my union with General Lee were universally detected;—and that I could not do better than profit by the liberty I had thus acquired, by bestowing my heart according to its original suggestions, in pursuance of the system which had induced me to emancipate myself from Lady Derenzy's trammels by a repugnant matrimonial engagement."

"But it was *not* repugnant," persisted Lady Rawleigh. "Independent of the bond of early regard between you and of the generous sympathy evinced by him in every stage of your affairs, General Lee is a person whom no woman *could* regard with repugnance.—The most agreeable companion—the most graceful, courteous—"

"Thank you, thank you!" interrupted Lady

Sophia with emotion. "But I will not tax your kindness to invent arguments in my favour; for guiltless as I was of all evil intention, and fervent in veneration for my husband, I own I had the weakness to feel rebuked by such an accusation. I had no longer courage to encounter those whisperers of society by whom the falsehood had been propagated; or the credulous idlers who had been taught to misinterpret my character. I persuaded General Lee that my health required a residence abroad; and, in deference to my supposed predilections, Italy was selected to restore me;—*Italy!*"

"That was scarcely judicious; but the general probably recurred to the numerous foreign friendships and connexions you must have formed during your residence in Tuscany."

"And by so doing actually endangered my life!—Scarcely were we settled at Florence for the winter, when the force of association, the vexations I had recently endured, and my consciousness of the calumnies of which I had been the object, conspired to throw me into a most pre-

carious state of health;—and it was then, Frederica, I first became acquainted with the amiable character of Mary Trevelyan. I believe I acquired some interest in her eyes by being able to talk to her of Launceston and yourself;—while Lady Mary, from the similitude existing between my former position and her own, was to me as a memorial of my early dangers and troubles. During my long and tedious illness, your cousin devoted herself to me with all the patience of a sister, and I had ample leisure to become aware of all her excellence."

"But surely the kindness of General Lee rendered you independent of her attentions? In him you had an unfailing friend and companion!"

"I have promised you my entire confidence," replied Lady Sophia, while her lips quivered with rising emotion, and tears glistened in her eyes, "or I should find it difficult to confess the full extent of my weakness. Frederica! when a woman tells you that she is satisfied to feel esteem and friendship for her

husband, mistrust either her candour or her disposition. It is written that Love shall be the bond of wedlock; and nature, indignant to find her laws trifled with and rendered subservient to the mercenary interests of life, takes a signal vengeance on the offender. Till my marriage, I regarded the general with the dutiful affection of a daughter; but this sentiment was incompatible with our new position, and the deficiency was compensated by no happier result. My gratitude for his sacrifice in my favour rose like a barrier of ice eternally between us,—we existed and exist in a false position;—I cannot lose in his presence the humiliating consciousness of obligation, nor can *he* assume that familiarity of wedded life which if tender, he fears would sit ungracefully on his gray hairs;—if stern, appear an assumption of authority betraying the benefactor. Nor dare I give way to the accidental impulse of my feelings when they urge me to any show of sympathy in his opinions and conduct, lest he should attribute my warmth to hypocrisy or interested motives;—for among the flagitious misrepresen-

tations emanating from Lady Rochester and her lover, was an assertion that my 'devotion to my decrepit and doting husband was instigated by my solicitude—concerning his *will!*' A perpetual constraint therefore limits the measure of my affection; and wherever constraint exists between married people, mistrust and wretchedness are its companions.—I have no longer"—

But the words were arrested on her lips. The door of the box was turned on its noiseless hinges, and the attendant demanded for Lord Calder an admittance which, however, unwelcome, could scarcely be refused.

"I have held a long communing with myself," said his lordship, as he accepted a seat between Frederica and her friend, "in order to acquire courage for this intrusion;—for being seated in the Whitehaven's opposite box, my glass enabled me to discover you both engaged in some profoundly interesting discussion. Even the charming Ellen Tree has not induced you for a single instant to divert your attention from yourselves to the stage."

"But did you not naturally suspect," cried Lady Sophia, anxious to silence his comments on the interest of their conversation, "that we were arguing the important cause of your ball; and passing in review all possible costumes of all possible characters, to do justice to *your* hospitality and our own attractions?"—

"And what is the result of so much eloquence and debate?" inquired his lordship.

"That Lady Sophia accepts the part of Brenda Troil; while *I* am to figure forth as the sable Minna!" said Frederica, looking significantly at her friend, whom she thus entrapped into acquiescence with her plans.—"My brother and Sir Brooke will complete our group."

"You decline then the services of Mr. Rockingham?" inquired Lord Calder. "He will be happy to assist you, even should it be in the part of Triptolemus Yellowly."

"We do not wish to exhibit the perfection of perfectness in our arrangements," replied Lady Rawleigh, "or some miraculous effort of wit might be expected at our hands; for my

own part I intend to be too much amused with the general aspect of the pageant, to hazard any attempt at being amusing."

"*You* at least require no such pretension," replied Calder in a low voice, on perceiving that Lady Sophia had fixed her attention on the play-bill. "It is not to be amused or instructed that the world seeks the society of Lady Rawleigh.

> She that can *please* is certain to persuade—
> To-day is loved—to-morrow is obeyed!"

Involuntarily Frederica reverted to the details which had recently reached her ears concerning the tactics of Lord Calder and his friend; and a cloud overshadowed her countenance as she recoiled from his homage. For some minutes she maintained a contemplative silence.

"I suspect" said her insidious companion, "that you are rehearsing the part of the meditative Minna, and forbear to interrupt you."

"No! indeed," cried Lady Rawleigh. "I was simply considering your eulogium of the acting of Ellen Tree; and rejoicing that your

more extensive experience confirms my opinions. To me she presents the *beau idéal* of what an elegant woman should appear in her own drawing-room; nor in this respect has she, with the exception of her charming elder sister, a rival in my memory. But you who remember Farren—the Lady Teazle par excellence—are better skilled to do justice to her merits."

"You have ascribed to your favourite," observed Lady Sophia, "precisely the measure of attraction which the Parisians adjudge to the exquisite Mars. For my part, I am inclined to extend my degree of admiration still further: and to say that her delineation of every class of life is as perfect as her portraiture of our own. Ellen Tree is, in fact, the actress of nature and of truth,—no studied *points*, no ranting bursts of vehemence weary our attention in her simple and graceful performance."

"Were *I* to compare her with the most perfect in her own art, either among the living or the dead," said Lord Calder, "it would be with Abington;—that fascinating being whom I remember besieged by all the belles of the great

world for counsel touching their airs and graces, and furbelows; and whose Millamant and Widow Belmour afforded a living mirror for their edification."

"If I may trust the reminiscences of Lady Derenzy and her coterie, Abington's vein was exclusively comic, while Miss Tree, or I am much mistaken, would prove the best Imogen, Ophelia, or Viola on the stage."

"I am glad your enthusiasm has stopped short of Juliet," said Lady Rawleigh. "I doubt whether I could trust her tenderness of tone and nature sufficiently for the heroine of Verona."

"I never saw a woman,—or rather an actress,—who combined the gifts requisite to embody that exquisite creation," observed Lord Calder; "a creation combining the playful innocence of girlhood, with the impassioned fervour of a woman,—*of a wife*.—It is impossible to mark in stage representation the gradual development of Juliet's character. That lovely girl, for instance, whom you honoured with your notice the other night at Almack's—(we will call her Leonora,

for the sake of euphony)—with all her soft naïveté and grace, might bend her knee to Lady Capulet and reprove the garrulity of the nurse in the *first act*, without any injustice to the poet's fancy; but from the garden scene I should dismiss her as utterly incapable!—Before Juliet reappears in the balcony, the rock has been struck—the passionate tide of womanly feeling has gushed forth;—and it would require all Lady Rawleigh's purity of heart,—all *her* glow of sensibility, to do justice to such poetry as

> In truth, fair Montagu, I am too fond,
> And therefore thou must think my 'haviour light,
> Yet trust me, gentleman, I'll prove more true
> Than they who have more cunning to be strange."

In the recital of these lines, Lord Calder threw somewhat more of animation and emotion than accords with the even tenour of ordinary discourse; and it was not till the last tones of his rhapsody had melted in her ears,—while her face was covered with blushes, arising from the significance of his compliment,—that Frederica noticed her husband's entrance into the box, and his bewildered stare of astonishment and vexa-

tion! Appearances were strangely against her! She had tranquillized his alarms by announcing herself about to pass a solitary evening with a female friend;—and he found her listening, with visible traces of sensibility upon her countenance, to the tender declamations of an accomplished libertine!—Appearances were strangely against her!

Meanwhile Lady Sophia, who perceived nothing peculiar in the position of the parties, and who, in her perfect reliance on Frederica's excellence, and Frederica's attachment to her husband, was satisfied that Rawleigh's arrival was extremely acceptable to her friend, rather heightened than soothed the disorder of the honourbale member for Martwich, by exclaiming with playful eagerness, "I congratulate myself, my dear Sir Brooke, that you have thus opportunely made your appearance among us. There is a petition I am dying to make to Lord Calder; and I have been resigning myself to the conviction that I have no chance of obtaining *his* attention so long as Frederica's is disengaged. Do for goodness sake sit down, and make your-

self as agreeable to Lady Rawleigh as ever you did to Miss Rawdon, in order that my request may be framed and granted without reaching her ears."

There was no possibility of refusing the seat to which, by a motion of Lady Sophia's hand, he was invited beside his wife,—although he entertained a suspicion that it had only been very recently vacated by Lord Calder; and even Frederica was obliged to follow the indication of her friend, and enter into conversation with Sir Brooke, who appeared quite as cross as if he had been encountering a second dinner with his Argyll-street cousin, or a sixth with his Martwich constituents. She managed, however, to manufacture a few questions of sufficient length and breadth to evince her integrity towards Lady Sophia and her secrets; while Rawleigh, on the contrary, dotted forth his jealousy and ill-humour in such concise monosyllables, that it required a considerable exercise of candour on his lady's part, not to overhear the greater portion of the dialogue of her companions.

"I am obstinately bent on your allowing me

to bring a young friend of mine to your fête," had been Lady Sophia's opening phrase. "I have very little doubt, by the way, that most persons of your acquaintance experience a similar inclination; though very few may have found sufficient audacity to make it known. Mine, however, is of a most unlimited extent; and I not only ask your permission to introduce a stranger into your inaccessible abode, but insist that you trust implicitly to me for her right and title to such an honour,—without explanation given or required."

"You are indeed affording me a most unexpected proof of kindness in an opportunity of meeting your wishes," replied Calder; who was far more anxious to listen to the terms of greeting between Sir Brooke and Lady Rawleigh, than to the name of her ladyship's protégée. "You shall receive a blank card to-morrow."

"To satisfy your apprehensions on one point," she resumed in the same sportive tone, "be assured that my demand has no connexion with the untuneable patronymic, so dis

cordant to your ears and those of my aunt Derenzy."

"If you allude to Miss Waddlestone," observed Calder with an air of candour and bonhommie, "be assured that my ball will be embellished by her presence. The Princesse de Guéménée has undertaken to bring her; and I am so far from wishing to disown the acquaintance of a man whom, as Lord Vardington, I pronounced to be one of the most intelligent and gentlemanly with whom I ever conversed, that I have made it a point to leave my name and an invitation with her father. But Mr. Waddlestone, in a spirit to which I render justice and honour, has declined it. I am happy to say that *his* is at present the only negative I have received."

As the details of a meeting broken "by most admired disorder,"—whether an election committee, or a *petit comité* in a private box of the Pandemonium called a patent theatre,—are far from amusing, either in fact or recapitulation, it will be more satisfactory as well as more

edifying to turn from Rawleigh's discontents and Frederica's anxieties, to an explanation of the position and disposition of this said Mr. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House;—a personage deserving higher respect than to be introduced solely as an object of mystification to the reader.

It is probable that he would have been regarded with greater interest some nineteen years previous to his appearance on the Hampton race-ground; for at the age of twenty-one, although unencumbered with a vulgar name, and a splendid fortune, he might have been cited as exhibiting a rare union of personal and mental endowments. An accidental encounter with the heiress of one of the wealthiest aldermen of the city of London was destined however to transform him from a well-connected young barrister, with his way to make in the world by his own abilities, into an independent man, condemned for the remainder of his days to association with persons of unpolished habits and uncultivated minds. Cheered by the competition and gratulations of his professional

associates, the gay and handsome Edward Meredyth did not hesitate to accept the seemingly brilliant destiny opened to him by the avowed partiality of Miss Waddlestone; and within a few weeks from their first introduction at Weymouth, his name and fate were changed as if by the commencement of a new existence. But long before the termination of the honeymoon, he began to doubt whether his career of professional exertion might not have been preferable to the golden independence shared with a companion so totally devoid of delicacy or intellectuality as the partner whom he had chosen,— or rather who had chosen him, for the remainder of his days.

For some time he indulged in a delusive hope that cultivation and intercourse with the world would soften down the glaring vulgarity of Mrs. W.'s mind and manners. But these visionary expectations gradually subsided; and had it not been for the dawning beauty and promising disposition of the little girl, who had been the pledge of this inauspicious union, the treasures of opulence would have been insuf-

ficient to render life endurable. Even here, however, disappointments awaited him, such as form, and ought to form, the retributive chastisement of mercenary alliances. He was persuaded that Leonora could not fail to contract something of Mrs. W.'s coarseness of feeling and demeanour; and the repining husband had too strong a respect for the claims of a woman whose moral conduct was irreproachable and heart warmly affectionate, and who was moreover the sole artificer of his fortunes, to interpose the slightest barrier between the tenderness of a mother and her child. Fortunately the parents of the heiress had not exhibited that tenacious longevity peculiar to persons blest with large property and expectant heirs; and his mortified feelings experienced some consolation in escaping the sneers of his envious friends and connexions, and flying from his splendid mansion and princely establishment to the less fastidious circles of the Continent.

It was gratifying to a man of his sensitive disposition to alienate his darling from the con-

tamination of her mother's low connexions and servile associates, and devote his whole time to her improvement, and by procuring for her the first masters which Italy could furnish, render her accomplishments worthy the brilliant fortune of which she was the sole inheritor. Nor did Leonora disappoint his partial expectations. Her beauty and talents, and gentleness, would have done honour to the most illustrious parentage. But above all, she was capable of appreciating the high endowments of that father to whom she had proved a spring of hope in the wilderness;—and they became united by a species of mutual affection, which would have resembled the bond of friendship rather than of filial and paternal love, but that it was qualified by respect on one side, and a tenderness amounting to idolatry on the other.

To do poor Mrs. Waddlestone simple justice, she never evinced the slightest jealousy of either. She regarded her husband and her child as the finest things in the world; and had not this partiality been exceeded by her reverence for those still finer things,—money and

rank,—she might perhaps have been tamed down into less ostensible vulgarity. But from her youth upwards (saving in the instance of her tender passion for young Edward Meredyth) she had looked forward to achieving greatness;—had been highly displeased by her husband's renouncement of a city career, and the contingency of a knighted shrievalty;—and now exulted in Leonora's loveliness, and Leonora's captivations, chiefly with the view to becoming mother-in-law to a lord. She was indefatigable in admonishing her daughter, when beyond the reach of Mr. W.'s reproval that she would never consent to her union with any man below the condition of a peer.

Meanwhile on Leonora's approach to womanhood, her vigilant and discriminating father naturally became anxious to see her surrounded by the precepts and example of her own countrywomen; and her fifteenth birthday was celebrated in that country which has been stigmatized as a land of shopkeepers, and which in its habits and opinions is decidedly the most

aristocratic in Europe. But Mr. W. no sooner found himself settled at Waddlestone House, than he began to doubt the wisdom of his system of education; and to wish that he had nerved his courage to support the inferior associations of his appointed destiny, and renounce the attractions of a long residence abroad. His wealth and intellectual resources had gradually opened his way to the first society on the Continent. Persons of every rank advance a step in importance by settling abroad; and the liberality, exquisite taste, and unexceptionable address of Mr. Waddlestone had introduced him not only to the highest native circles of Italy, but to those of his titled countrymen by whom they were frequented. His wife meanwhile (alas! that such should be his wife) finding little attraction in a society of which the dialogue was a sealed book, wisely preferred remaining at home with Leo and the governess; and thus secured her husband, in the eyes of the world, from the degrading association of a companion so inferior to himself.

But on returning to England the spell was broken!—In his own country Mr. W. felt that he must encounter the suffrage of society in his positive capacity as co-partner in a soap manufactory, and sole partner of one of the most vulgar women in the three kingdoms; and what was far more revolting to his feelings, that his graceful, elegant, Leonora must be ushered into the world under her auspices, and sought in marriage by some person of a similar degree! He felt that his lovely child would be rejected from the rank of life in which he desired to fix her destiny,—or that she would be sought from interested motives by some noble spendthrift, intent on teaching her to "forget her own people and her father's house;" while the undisguised prejudice cherished by Mrs. Waddlestone for lords of every sort and denomination, soon made him tremble for the choice which must decide the happiness of his daughter.

It was under these circumstances that Lord Launceston had made the acquaintance of the family, and accepted Mrs. W.'s unequivocal partialities in his favour; and the anxious

father soon became very favourably impressed by the frank and noble disposition of Leonora's new admirer.—He saw him untainted by the scornful self-sufficiency of his caste; uncontaminated by the narrow bigotry of fine-gentlemanism; and was delighted to perceive that the fancy entertained by his lord-loving lady for the Hon. Col. Rhyse and Lord Putney, previous to Launceston's arrival, was fully transferred to the new pretendant. It was not, indeed, that the youthful proprietor of Marston Park and its mortgagee affected any contempt for his own conventional rank; but he regarded it as of no supreme importance, and incapable of elevating him above a man of such perfectly gentlemanly tone and eminent talents as Mr. Waddlestone. There was, in short, an unaffected cordiality of heart about Lord Launceston which placed him above the petty affectations of the exquisites and exclusives who already thronged around the heiress of five hundred thousand pounds.

But Mr. W. had become intimately acquainted with the perils and dangers of precipitate matrimony; and was desirous that his

daughter should extend her observations in the rank of life to which her mother's whims and her own dowry appeared to limit her choice, previous to an irrevocable decision. He had formerly imagined the docile Leonora as warmly inclined in favour of Lord Offaley's younger son, Horatio, as she now appeared towards the brother of Lady Rawleigh; and dreading her vacillation of feeling on such a point, eagerly renounced his former determination that she should enter into such circles only as were freely open to her mother. He even succeeded in persuading Mrs. Waddlestone tha Leonora's future interests would be best served by allowing her to make an occasional appearance in the great world under the care of their Italian friends, the Duchess of Whitehaven, the Princesse de Guéménée, or Lady Wroxworth; and having accomplished this point, patiently waited the result of his daughter's fashionable connexions.

Few things were nearer his heart than that she should retain her attachment for Lord Launceston, and cultivate the friendship of the

gentle and amiable Lady Rawleigh. But earnestly as he desired to fix Leonora's future destiny in their society, he did not shrink from exposing her feelings to the ordeal of Almack's and the temptations of Calder House, in order to assure himself that their predilection was as permanent as it was honourable to her judgment.

## CHAPTER VI.

The town, the court, is beauty's proper sphere;—
*That* is our heaven, and we are angels there.
In the gay circle thousand Cupids rove:—
The "House of Calder" is the court of Love!

LORD LYTTLETON.

SHORT and cheerful were the days and nights that intervened previous to the fête at Calder House; for they were enlivened by some half-a-dozen balls of minor importance given by the Draxfields, Whitehavens, and Wandesfords, and by the exciting anticipations and discussions arising from the promised masque. Even the longest summer's-day becomes abbreviated for fine ladies who open their eyes to its sunshine at three o'clock;—even the tedious mo-

notony of night proves but little wearisome to fine gentlemen, for whose recreation Folly shakes her bells from midnight till sunrise!

More than once during the week Lady Rawleigh ventured to allude to Lady Sophia Lee's original reluctance to her project, and to tax her with all the contrariety of conjugal rebellion in having resisted the General's request that she would accept the invitation of Lord Calder;—for she had since become one of the most eager debaters on the anticipated pleasures and splendours of the evening.

"It is true," she replied, in extenuation, "that on my arrival in England, I was anxiously bent on avoiding the society of these people—who are distasteful to me on general grounds—and positively odious when I reflect on their peculiar dealings towards myself. But I am unwilling to afford such persons as Mr. Vaux and Lady Rochester the gratification of perceiving they possess the power to influence my actions;—and, in truth, I have a latent object for wishing to join in the mêlée."

"An object?" cried Frederica, suddenly

checking her horse under the shade of one of those spreading elms which shelter the fair equestrians of Routine-row; and approaching so near her friend as to be beyond reach of Launceston's and Lord Putney's inquisition.

"No, no!—Do not suppose, *ma belle et bonne*, that I intend to part on such easy terms with my secret. The commonplace and matter-of-fact existence of a London season so rarely affords the gratification of a mystery, that I cannot possibly dispense with even half a cloud in your favour. Thursday night, remember, must of necessity reveal the oracle!"

But when Thursday night—*the* Thursday night really arrived,—Frederica was too much engaged in the general interests of the fête, the fêter, and the fêted, to retain any remembrance of Lady Sophia Lee's mysterious announcement; and had been moreover too much harassed for several antecedent days by Sir Brooke's involuntary ebullitions of matrimonial irritation which had been in no slight measure augmented by the incident of the theatrical rendezvous, to concede even to these the im-

portance so much their due. Unable to manufacture any reasonable excuse for forbidding his wife's appearance at the fête,—unwilling that she should join in its seductions without the restraint of his presence,—yet loathing the necessity which compelled him to enter the enchanted circle of Calder House,—the unhappy man was fidgeted beyond all the consolations of his philosophy! He had no ear at his disposal to which he could intrust the measure of his domestic griefs; for Lady Launceston, through some strange obliquity of moral vision, seemed to regard this odious entertainment as a matter of exultation and delight;—Sophronia, of Twickenham, was never more gratified than by hearing the names of her nephew and niece connected with that of the distinguished Calder; and poor Mrs. Martha, his never-failing source of sympathy,—whose mild unguent of commiseration was generally so much at his service,—had taken this inopportune moment to convey herself and the dingy linnet to Eastbourne for change of dulness.—"Mr. Richard Derenzy and family" had also "departed" in

the middle of the fashionable winter, to pass the summer at his seat in the fens of Lincolnshire, at the imminent risk of extirpation by the gnats or the typhus fever;—and thus not one of the numerous savages of Sir Brooke's especial horde was at hand to endure the brunt, or moderate the misgivings of his ill-humour. Frederica began to think that the demon of discord had obtained a permanent settlement in Bruton-street; and Rawleigh, with the genuine near-sightedness of a jealous man, betrayed his apprehensions of the superior attractions of his rival's dwelling and society, by rendering his own as disagreeable as his utmost industry could effect.

From all these trivial but vexatious contrarieties, a prospect of escape to Lord Calder's land of Faëry was indeed inviting; and never had Frederica entered her carriage at midnight with a lighter step or more sanguine expectations of pleasure, than when—plaided to the utmost rigour of the law—she seated herself beside Lord Launceston on her way to Calder House, while Sir Brooke followed in the cha-

racter of Mordaunt Merton and the chariot of Lady Sophia. In the course of a few minutes they entered a courtyard disciplined by a regiment of policemen, and illuminated by the flashing of a thousand torches.

"Remember, Launceston, you are engaged to be my cavalier for the evening," whispered Lady Rawleigh to the bold Cleveland,—when she perceived, through the gleaming windows of the splendid pile indications of a tremendous crowd assembled within.

"Certainly!—Unless you release me for the space of a waltz or two with my pretty little wife. Leonora accompanies the Guémenées to-night, who have taken upon themselves to misrepresent the Midsummer Night's Dream; my angel being, of course, Titania, and old Broughley the illustrious Bottom. But tell me, Frederica,—what fair unknown is Rawleigh handing out of Lady Sophia's carriage?"

"Herself,—in the character of my blue-eyed sister, Brenda Troil."

"*Juste ciel! il y en a deux!* as the French

ghost-seer exclaimed. But Lady Sophia's wraith is as black and ugly as Hecate."

"She has certainly recruited some stranger into our group in the part of Norna of the Fitful Head!" cried Lady Rawleigh in a tone of vexation; and she began to think herself ill-used that her friend had not consulted her inclinations on the subject.

But to how incalculable a measure of indignation did this feeling expand, when,—on joining Lady Sophia at the door of the vestibule, in order to take her arm and make their entrance in Zetland sisterhood,—she perceived, not only that her suspicions of the intrusion of an importunate Norna into their community were founded on fact, but that this unwelcome addition—this importunate appendix—this Zetland supererogation—was imbodied in the person of the odious Miss Elbany!—In spite of the elf-locks wild which hung in hideous luxuriance round her walnut-stained countenance,—in spite of the coarse and unsightly draperies which transformed her fine person into the semblance of decrepitude,—there was no mis-

taking the large dark eyes and lofty brow of Lady Launceston's astucious companion!—

Frederica was paralyzed!—at once by the audacity of the intruder, and the unfair deception exercised upon herself. A thousand vagaries rushed through her mind in explanation of the event. Her infatuated parent had perhaps interested Lady Sophia in favour of her protégée,—for Lady Launceston's undisguised interest in the fête was otherwise difficult of comprehension;—Sir Brooke himself was probably the confederate of a design which had tempted him to overcome his repugnance to Calder and his clique;—and as to her brother,—there could be little doubt of *his* having acted as an accomplice from first to last! All,—all—her nearest and dearest had thus leagued themselves to force her into collision with a designing upstart,—her rival with mother, and brother, and husband!

But the tact and good-breeding of modern times interdict a *scene* in society, even for the gratification of an angry beauty; and Frederica ascended the crowded stairs with much dig-

nity, and without deigning to demand an explanation from any of the party. Had she condescended to bend either ear or eye towards their movements, she might have ascertained from the genuine and delighted start of astonishment which followed the ingenuous Launceston's recognition of Miss Elbany, that *he* at least was as complete a dupe as herself; but as it was, Lady Rawleigh entered the gorgeous saloon with a spot burning on her cheek, and an air of perturbation fluttering her brow, which only too well became the agitated heroine of the Pirate.

Lady Sophia Rhyse, on the contrary, whose countenance sparkled with exultation arising either from gratified benevolence in reuniting the lovers, or possibly from the feminine triumph of making mischief,—seemed to have regained her earliest flush of youth in order to do justice to the beauties of the golden Brenda, while her fair hair and deep blue eyes derived new grace from the picturesque simplicities of her Scottish costume; and thus, chance imparted to either sister the expression best

befitting her fictitious character.—A murmur of approbation greeted the entrance of the group.

But what Ariostoian pen might presume to describe the dazzling magnificence of the gallery devoted to the court of the Faëry Queen?—Even Lady Rawleigh, though swelling under the consciousness of injury and in some measure obscured in vision by the rising tears of jealous caprice, was startled by the gorgeous arrangements of the scene. Experienced as she was in the cameleon-like nature of Lady Rochester's charms, she had not prepared herself for the splendour of Gloriana's attire, or the well-manufactured loveliness of her radiated on her throne of state, among bowers of blossoming orange-trees, radiant with smiles and diamonds, and fanned by a bevy of resplendent Cupids,—of Lord Johns, and Lord Harries and Lord Cecils, borrowed from the nurseries of her friends the Duchess of Lancaster and Lady Rosebank,—by a very slight effort of indulgence she might be said to picture forth the mother of the Graces. The gentle Una, meanwhile, wore a

chaste holiness of brow which afforded no grounds for the report that she had ever smiled on Lord Putney's addresses, or listened to the double-entendres of Lord Rochester;—Lady Blanche Thornton, as Belphœbe, seemed as well satisfied that

> Upon her forehead many graces sat
> Under the shadow of her even brows,

as Mr. Vaux's flatteries could render her;—while Lady Barbara Dynley and Lady Waldington had tamed down their wandering glances into the pure simplicity of Fidelia and Speranza!

Lord [illegible]allingford,—a second Lucifer in sin and beauty—was the representative of the Red Cross Knight;—the milk-and-water nephew of Lord Calder, Alfred Rockingham, had been thrust into the part of Sir Satyrane;—Sir Guyon was embodied by Lord Putney;—the aged Celia by the withered Lady Huntingfield;—and Charissa by the dowager Duchess of Ledbury, with her whole soul engrossed by "the point, the vole, and the king." Vaux was the royal Arthur! Sir Caleb Thornton had consented to invest

himself in Duessa's hideosities; Timeas was Sir Mark Milman; Mr. Fieldham was Artegal; Blandamour and Paridel, Sir Robert Morse and Mr. Erskyne; in a word, the whole corps dramatique of the fashionable world, however unconnected with these pages, had been enlisted into the ranks of Spenser's gorgeous romance.

But notwithstanding the exquisite taste displayed throughout the draperies and grouping of the masque, by Sir Philip Ochre the fashionable academician who had consented to act as stage-manager, the inefficiency of the actors contrived to convert it into a succession of ill-imagined and worse-executed tableaux. Lord Calder had previously concerted the arrangements of the evening so that the crimson velvet curtains concealing that portion of the gallery destined to dramatic representation, might be drawn aside at the overture of an invisible orchestra,—to which, on Lady Rawleigh's arrival, a signal was communicated by himself; and few even of the uninitiated but perfectly understood when the first soft measures of this seem-

supernatural music were heard, that the

lovely woman by whose side his lordship was pleased to station himself, was the unacknowledged queen of the fête.

For full five minutes, every one was in an ecstacy of delight, and exclaimed that never was there exhibited so exquisite an illusion;—in five minutes more, every one yawned, and wondered what would come next;—and in the concluding five minutes of the quarter of an hour destined to the representation of a masque which had cost a thousand pounds or so in its preparatives, every one whispered that the whole thing was a bore,—that Lady Rochester sat like an effigy and seemed to forget they had any thing better to do than admire her;—and that after all the best actor in the business was Mrs. Erskyne's lion,—a stuffed quadruped borrowed from the British Museum!—The spectators, in fact, were all dying to get rid of the Faery Queen, that they might walk about and show their own costumes!

Meanwhile Lord Launceston had decidedly, and as it were in his own despite, riveted himself to the side of the Weird woman of the Fitful

Head;—Sir Brooke Rawleigh found himself reluctantly compelled to offer *his* escort to the blue-eyed Brenda;—and thus Lord Calder remained at liberty to act as the guardian of the deserted Minna.

"I have never yet been tempted to assume a fancy costume," he whispered, glancing at his dark and unadorned sleeve as he drew her arm within his own, "but had I ventured to anticipate the honour I now experience, I would have laid aside for once these sober sable weeds to assume the patriarchal dignity of Magnus Troil. Too happy should I be in even the passing dream of claiming a father's privileged interest in the destiny of the pensive Minna."

Lady Rawleigh attempted to regain her accustomed air of serenity as she listened to this equivocal allusion to the vexations clouding her brow. Had they been less real and less absorbing, her mistrust would probably have been excited by Lord Calder's artful affectation of assuming a *paternal* tone in his homage. But while he was still speaking, a band stationed at the head of the grand staircase struck up a Po-

lonaise; and, heading the procession, he hastened to conduct Frederica through the suite of state rooms,—already crowded with the representatives of all nations and languages, attired in every variety of the superb and picturesque.

Dazzled by their gorgeous array, and startled from her personal meditations by the novelty, and stir, and flurry of such a scene, she gradually forgot that Miss Elbany linked either with the treacherous Rawleigh or the infatuated Launceston was promenading behind her, and gave herself up to the illusions of the hour;—to the animating inspiration of military music,—resplendent illuminations,—groves of unknown exotics,—and groups of all that was beautiful, illustrious, or grotesque in fashionable nature.

There was the Duchess of Middlesex, one of the gravest and most spotless of matrons, unsuspectingly exhibiting her loveliness in the costume of Raphael's Fornarina!—there was Lady Lawford, all rouge and crowsfeet, disfiguring the dress of Vandyke's Duchesse de St. Croix! Lady Margaret Fieldham displayed a visage as harsh as that of Carabosse enveloped

in the velvet coif and pearly carcanet of the beautiful Mary of Scotland;—while the old Duchess of Trimblestown, grimly illuminated by diamond lanterns, had discriminatingly chosen to herself the farthingale and fraise of Catherine de Medicis, and looked fully capable of originating a second St. Bartholomew.

Then there was the bridal Viscountess, the plaintive little Lady Twadell, elevated by the most sublime cork-heels which Melmotte could manufacture into the semblance of a pigmy Cleopatra; while her genuine antique of a Lord, periwigged and *grand-cordon*-ed into a courtier of the time of Louis XIV., looked three shades yellower than his hereditary point ruffles. The Coveys and Mapleberries had joined forces to form the brigade of the nine sisters of Parnassus; having furnished themselves with *ormoulu* lyres, palettes, and flutes, which Lord Launceston persisted in mistaking for marrowbones and cleavers;—and Lady Lotus, as guardian of the classical group, had profited largely by Sir Christopher's store of Oriental bangles, armlets, and other Brahminical mys-

teries, to assume the full-orbed lustre of the Priestess Luxima. Sir Christopher Lotus himself, with a countenance as blank and wirewove as a new Album, represented Sir Roger de Coverley; and the excellent Lady Wroxworth was admirably at home in Lady Lizard. Mr. Dynley, to whom Lady Rawleigh vouchsafed only a formal bow *en passant*, formed an apt representative of Ali Pacha—

> Full of strange oaths, and bearded like a pard;

and was closely followed by the lofty Indice, converted by a peaked and hungry beard into the hyperbolical Malvolio,—a sneer on his lips, and a chamberlain's wand in his hand.

Just as they reached a vestibule dividing the suite from a staircase or rather reuniting it with the masque gallery, so that there was no possibility of escape or evasion, Frederica recognized at the opposite entrance the splendid group of the Midsummer Night's Dream; and the beautiful Princesse de Guéménée, attired as the buskined Hyppolita with a diamond crescent sparkling on her imperial brow, immediately came for-

ward to receive the homage of the lordly host. Her Theseus was the distinguished looking Count Rodenfels, familiarized by his birthright with the dignities of royal representation. The Prince was Lysander; and two daughters of Lady Waldington, Helena and Hermia. But all eyes were attracted towards the elfin crew which completed the picture; consisting of the Rodenfels' children as Moth, Peaseblossom, and Cobweb,—Colonel Rhyse as Robin Goodfellow,—Prince Albert de Guéménée as Oberon, and Leonora—Lord Launceston's Leonora—as Titania!—Her father's liberal partiality had encircled her innocent brows with a diadem of diamond stars; her zone was wrought in the most precious gems, with mystic characters,—her silver wand tipped with "one entire and perfect chrysolite;" while her draperies of silver tissue were looped with strings of pearls such as task the fishers of Ormus. Frederica felt a thrill of triumphant delight as she noted the diminutive and delicate loveliness of the queen of the fairies, and recalled to mind the hideous transformation to which Miss Elbany's vanity had

consented in order to insure an entrance into Calder House. She even commiserated the self-reproach which she could not but attribute to her brother on finding thus strangely united in his presence his gentle and neglected love,—his bold and and triumphant mistress.

As the rival parties became too closely commingled in the vestibule, and were of too familiar acquaintance in society to pass and "make no sign," Lady Rawleigh profited by the colloquy between Lord Calder and the Amazonian queen to turn round for the first time during their promenade, and ascertain the effect produced on her companions by the encounter. But Lady Sophia and Mordaunt Merton were deeply engaged in some seemingly interesting conversation; and she had scarcely an opportunity to note that Sir Brooke, even in the assumed character of Brenda's adorer, wore an air of secret vexation, such as the rough "course of his true love" might be supposed to produce. On the present occasion, however, it was neither her husband nor her friend who moved

her mischievous curiosity; and she hastened to bend an inquiring glance towards her brother, —the ferocious Norna,—and the queen of the fairies!

Leonora, holding the hand of the young Prince de Guéménée, was standing only a few paces distant from Lord Launceston, and looking all the loveliness which might be supposed to cover him with confusion. But to the utter amazement of Frederica, not a vestige of shame clouded the expression of his frank and open countenance!—He seemed quite as well satisfied with himself, as with the aspect of his bride, or the vicinity of the lady clinging to his arm;—nay! to the increasing astonishment of his sister, he presumed to kiss the tip of his finger to the smiling and gratified Titania, with an air of affectionate recognition and intelligence. It was really too much!—

And Miss Elbany?—How did her usual lofty self-possession uphold her through such an ordeal?—Lady Rawleigh felt that her own surprise would not be the least augmented by

seeing the Companion imitate the assurance of the bold Pirate, and bestow a condescending salutation on the heiress. But this trial she was spared. Instead of boldly confronting the stately Theseus and his train, Lucy had shaken her black elf-locks over her shoulders and countenance, so that the expression of her face was totally concealed from observation; and stood describing circles with her wizard staff,—that staff so different in its powers of enchantment from the light and jewelled wand of her elegant rival!

Uncertain whether she was aware of her proximity to the affianced wife of Lord Launceston, and rendered indignant by her brother's uncompromising defiance of propriety,—Frederica turned towards them with the intention of addressing his lordship in such terms as might reveal the fact; but at that moment "came wandering by a figure like a"—numskull's!—being that of Lord George, as Petrarch, arrayed for his coronation at the Capitol,—in a robe of crimson velvet, with a

pyramidal cap (not very dissimilar from the juvenile dunce's pedagogue-inflicted cap of maintenance) encircled with a garland of bays; while his cloak of white satin was borne according to the authentic formula of the Roman solemnity, by "a young girl with dishevelled locks,—her feet bare—her figure enveloped in a leopard's skin,—to represent ENTHUSIASM." But alas! for this uninviting personification,—his lordship had been unable to secure a younger or a fairer nymph than Lady Lavinia Lisle; and as he stalked sublimely into the room, followed on tiptoe by the little be-cardinalled general, his admiring uncle,—Lord Launceston affected to mistake the inspired damsel in her shaggy drapery for some Caribbean queen escaped from her wigwam, and in pursuit of a human meal.

"She certainly must belong to one of the cannibal tribes," he exclaimed aloud: while Sir Brooke Rawleigh by way of cover to the impertinence of his brother-in-law, advanced towards Laura's lover and intreated him to do

justice to the charms of his Brenda in an impromptu sonnet.

"To heavenly themeth thublimer thwainth belong,"

lisped the lyrical lord;—and the band again striking up, the procession returned into the gallery.

## CHAPTER VII.

You to whom nature
Gave with a liberal hand most excellent form,
With education, language, and discourse
And judgment to distinguish; when you shall
With feeling sorrow understand how wretched
And miserable you have made yourself,
And but yourself have nothing to accuse,
—Can you with hope, from any beg compassion?

THE LITTLE FRENCH LAWYER.

THE morning sun was shining brightly on the roses and pinks in Lady Rawleigh's dressing-room window when, being at length disencumbered of her Scottish costume and Mrs. Pasley's attendance, she threw herself down on the sofa,—in the luxurious ease of solitude, and a cambric peignoir;—to enjoy the freshness of

the air, and meditate over the signs and wonders of the clamorous crowd at Calder House from which she had just escaped.

The fragrance of the early morn is a long-established theme for the eloquence of all budding poets, heroines of a vicarage-breakfast-table, and worshippers of sweet syllabub and sweet sentiment throughout the world. The hay-field, — the bean-field, — the hawthorn-hedge, —the rose just washed in a shower, and the woodbine just budding in a bower,—have had honourable mention in all collections of select poetry,—whether invested in calf "for the use of schools," or invested in morocco and album-tabby, for the use of lords and ladies afflicted with a dull country-house or a procrastinating cook. But not the most sensitive of these ode-ous minstrels,—not the most unsophisticated hedger and ditcher of England's fifty-two counties,—not the white-robed damsel of the parsonage,—not the "kwinthon-wobed Pet-waach of the Capitol,"—was ever half so skilled to appreciate the charms of "the incense-breathing morn," as a London fine lady,

escaping from the effluvia of expiring lamps, dying tapers, fading flowers, and stale Eau de Cologne, to the fresh breeze of the early day, and the silence of her own chamber.

Frederica had been often conscious of the relief produced on the fête-fevered frame by a similar vicissitude; had often refreshed her brow from the dust of the crowded festival by a cooling ablution:—had often thrown open her window to enjoy an atmosphere still pure from the sooty exhalations of fifty-thousand hearths,—still unshaken by the vociferation of a million and a half of human beings.—But never had she felt so agreeably released from the sense of moral and physical oppression as when,—exchanging the motley glare of the Calder masque for the calm seclusion of home,—she leant her cheek upon her hand, to muse over the miracles of the night.

There appeared no solution to its mysteries,—no end to its annoyances! From the coldness of Sir Brooke's demeanour towards her, to the alarming warmth of Lord Calder's devotion,—from her brother's nonchalance, to Lady So-

phia's officious interference,—from Miss Elbany's unabashable presumption, to Leonora's childish infatuation,—all was inexplicable—all distressing!

While Lady Blanche, and Lady Barbara, and Louisa Erskyne, and others still more fair, still more artful, still more envious, returned home burning with indignation at the honours bestowed by the lord of the revels on a personage so little resplendent as Lady Rawleigh—or as Minna Troil,—at the remembrance of Frederica in her simple robe of muslin and tartan, leading the Polonaise and sharing the velvet canopy of the royal supper table presided by Lord Calder,—and of themselves in all their bright array of gold and diamonds reduced to the total eclipse of an inferior position,—the object of their jealousy had not a thought nor a recollection to bestow on these superfluous honours. Instead of pluming herself on the distinctions of the evening, she regarded the Calder House festivities as a source of unequivocal humiliation to herself, and anxiety on the behalf of those

who were dearest to her. Miss Elbany had suddenly re-appeared on the stage, as if emitted by the trapdoor of a pantomime, and all her suspicions of Rawleigh were again awakening;—and as to Leonora,—poor Leonora,—poor dear Leonora,—the business was really too deplorable, and the tears came into her own hazel eyes as she thought of it!—That ever the Honourable Lady Rawleigh of Rawleighford, should live to weep over her noble brother's infidelities to the heiress of Waddlestone and Co.!—

It is certain that people who live in the world,—or rather who never live out of the world,—are compelled to seize upon very extraordinary moments for their confidences and declarations! There is not a third-rate belle of a second-rate country town, who would pour her soft sorrows into the bosom of a sympathizing friend, in any situation less romantic than a bower full of moonlight, or a wood full of nightingales;—there is not a small attorney throughout the wolds or wilds of Yorkshire, who would offer his little self, his little business, and his little heritage to

their acceptance, in any locale less purely romantic than the cowslip-sprinkled turf

Under the hawthorn in the dale.

"*Aux bords de la Durance,*" the soft confession would be murmured to a guitar accompaniment; and on the lonely Carron-side, piped forth in "oaten stop or pastoral song."

But amid the vile sophistications of the metropolis, a vast deal of love and friendship is necessarily made in public;—proposals are tendered during the dismemberment of a chicken's wing; — and sentimental confidences uttered while Musard is screwing-up his fiddle to concert pitch. And thus it was during Lord Calder's search after the finest *brugnon à la glace* of an extensive pyramid, for the lady of his thoughts, that he had presumed to breathe a few syllables somewhat less icy; — it was when Frederica had retired into the cool seclusion of an open window after supper, to look out on the illuminated gardens of Calder House, that Titania—having stolen away from Puck, Pease-blossom, Moth, Cobweb, and Mustard,—ventured to

give utterance to those acknowledgments which now brought tears into the eyes of Lady Rawleigh. They had not, however, been wholly unsought on Frederica's part. Indignant to perceive the neglect evinced by Lord Launceston towards his wealthy bride, she more than hinted to Leonora her surprise that no part had been offered him or been sought by him in the Princesse de Guéménée's party; and her manner was so much that of sisterly interrogation, that the Queen of the Fairies was deeply touched by her sympathy. — With blushes and faltering tones more genuine than are usually to be found at a fancy-ball—she murmured a confession that she had long been anxious for a few words of explanation with Lord Launceston's sister.

"Nothing," said poor Leonora, "would have restrained my desire to tell you all the afflicting embarrassment of my situation, but the certainty that you would consider me guilty of presumptuous familiarity. Believe me I am fully aware of the distance between us;—nay! even of your own sense of its immensity. Yet so desirous am I of obtaining your good opi-

nion, that I would venture much to explain to you the painful nature of my connexion with Lord Launceston. I am persuaded you must be aware of the truth,—that all my folly is fully known to you;—and I tremble to think of the strength and rashness of an attachment which has induced me to risk the happiness of my life on so wild a cast."

Frederica was hesitating whether to enter more fully into the subject and in some measure open Miss Waddlestone's eyes to the critical position of her engagement, when the name of Miss Elbany was suspended on her lips by the approach of Messrs. Dynley and Indice; who, perceiving two persons engaged in an interesting dialogue and manifestly in retreat from intrusion, considered it their duty as disagreeable members of society to interpose with all the officious importunity of idle questions and laborious attendance. Till Prince Albert made his appearance to claim his partner, they fastened a most vigilant guardianship on their victims.

But after all, neither the husband nor the

lover,—the friend nor the brother,—the brother's chosen, nor the brother's rejected,—formed the most perplexing subject of Lady Rawleigh's musings.—Through some coincidence equally strange with that originating Lord Calder's sighs and Leonora's tears, Mrs. William Erskyne had taken it into her little head to appear at the fête at once in the character of Una, and of—*a dun!*—and scarcely had Indice and Dynley withdrawn their persecution, when Louisa sauntered towards her friend's retreat, and niched herself into the window of whispers vacated by Oberon's Queen.

"I wish myself joy of the luck of finding you alone, Frederica," said she, passing her hand through her own silken ringlets, and affecting a yawn of exhaustion to conceal her embarrassment. "I have called on you twice within these three days (like Howell and James's collecting clerk), with my 'small account;'—but whether you were riding with your new duenna, Lady Sophia, or had preternatural warnings of an unpaid bill,—certes you remained invisible."

"You imagine then that my sentence of not at home is framed in contradiction to the usual terms, and runs 'No *exclusion* except on business?'"

"Such at least is my own; and I think, or once thought, that there exists some little sympathy between our whims, and fancies, and follies!"

"And your small account is doubtless a calendar of horses hired, and pâtés devoured on the race-course?—I am really ashamed to have overlooked it so long," said Lady Rawleigh, wishing to avoid a prolongation of this branch of her giddy friend's discourse.

"By no means;—*that* account is of the tiniest dimensions,—a mere paltry fifteen guineas, and scarcely worth a visit of explanation. No! my dear; the grand affair is the Opera. The season being in its penultimate month, Laporte is obliged to gather together his credits and debits; and ours, I am ashamed to say, amounts in its united enormity to three hundred pounds, as you will perceive by the circular letter which I must send you to-morrow. I am very certain,

that two hundred was the sum originally specified;—I could not have been so grossly mistaken. But I find, on inquiring, that *three* is the universal price paid by our neighbours; and I conclude we had better surrender with a good grace in the first instance, where we are certain of ultimate defeat. I have promised to remit the money to the treasurer the beginning of next week."

Now the heaven-born Una was too deeply intent on vindicating her own error, or her own deception in the amount of the claim, to observe the change effected on Frederica's countenance by this intelligence; and even had she noticed that Minna assumed as deathlike a paleness as if Cleveland had that moment announced his lawless vocation, Louisa Erskyne would have found it difficult to conceive that a person at once so opulent and prudent as Rawleigh's bride and Lady Launceston's only daughter, could be at any moment deficient in cash. At one time she had half intended to beg the remaining hundred and fifty, her own portion of the debt, as a loan from her friend; when a re-

collection of those rumoured losses at Ash Bank which had reached her ears through her friend and gossip Lady Barbara, suggested the possibility of a refusal. She had therefore hastened to levy her supplies in a far more dangerous quarter; and having now exonerated herself from the stigma of a wilful mis-statement of the price of the Opera-box, had neither suspicion of nor interest in the disorder which her carelessness might have produced in Frederica's finances.

"I was not prepared for so large a sum," was Lady Rawleigh's reply, and uttered with the tranquillity of despair; "but if you consider the claim a fair one, I will take care not to disappoint you. How very handsome Lady Rochester is looking to-night," she continued, in order to evade a further chapter on finance. "She grows younger and prettier than Lady Wandesford."

"Yes! her own efforts do Delcroix ample justice;—no one is half so religious in her adoration of 'the cosmetic powers.' Calder, I perceive, has assisted her splendour with the family casket for this occasion, and made her

at once the queen of diamonds and the queen of hearts. By the way, my dear Fred., who is the amphibious monster, half-mermaid, half-maniac, appended to your group?—Is she intended as a foil to Minna or to Brenda,—or is it Lord Launceston's tutor in disguise,—or Captain Cleveland's master's-mate?"

"It is Lady Sophia Lee's Swiss footman, as you are probably well aware," replied Lady Rawleigh in the same bantering vein. "We fancied he might be useful in the crowd."

"I should have thought Lord Calder's attendance would have insured *your* safety," said Louisa in a tone of pique. "He has been attached like a bailiff to your footsteps the whole evening."

"To follow up your ingenious simile, you had better intrust him with the interest of your 'small account,'" observed her friend, rising from her seat, in order to terminate the conversation.

"Indeed!—has he so soon been installed the master of your mint?—After all, you very prudish people do the most outrageous things in the world!" But a whole current of imper-

tinence was arrested on her bitter lips, by the opportune arrival of Sir Brooke Rawleigh and Lady Sophia;—one of whom she systematically avoided from dislike, and the other from awe. They came to inquire for Norna and the Pirate, and to propose departure;—and thus ended Lady Rawleigh's evening of joy and triumph,—and such was the concluding distress which embittered her matin cogitations on her return to the dressing-room!—

Ye garrulous London sparrows!—who append your procreant cradles to the coignes of vantage of Nash's Palmyrene capitals, and torture us with premature chirpings;—ye Gaelic milk-maids! who deposit at our doors your jangling pails;—ye nigrescent cupids of Erebus! whose shrill announcements and pungent sacks importunately recal the beneficence of May-day Montagu;—ye water-carts, who slake the thirsty streets with your Grand Junction tears, and shake them with your rumbling wheels,—ye panniered dispensers of our daily bread, or daily rolls,—ye single knocks, obnoxious to the ear of the fashionable bankrupt,—why can ye

not delay for an hour or two your concert of harsh discords and unpleasing sharps, on the morning succeeding a fête!—The sleepless beauty cherishing the imaginary echoes of the soft whisper of tenderness so long anticipated, so quickly evanescent,—Lady Rawleigh conning over her unpaid bills,—Lord George hammering over his unfinished sonnet,—unite in reviling your importunate clamour, and exclaiming with the bard that "ye murder sleep!"—It was not till the progress of time had set in motion the demie-fortunes of the early apothecaries, that Frederica closed her eyes on her afflictions and determinations to apply to her mother for advice and assistance;—it was not till the afternoon sunshine had brought out the butterflies of fashion, that she opened them again on Pasley's announcement that Lord Launceston was waiting for her in the drawing-room.

Languid and dispirited, she hurried through her toilet in the certainty that her brother was come to magnify the measure of her vexations by some untoward announcement;—perhaps of

his rupture with Titania,—perhaps of his engagement to Mis Elbany;—for Lady Sophia had only too justly taxed Frederica with a habit of hazarding exaggerated anticipations.

"My dear Fred.!" cried her brother, dropping the Morning Post to take her offered hand,—"I am come to throw myself on your mercy; and in case you should harden your heart against me, to bully you into commiseration. It is now useless to deny your connivance in Lucy's plots,—the affair of last night convinces me you have been in her confidence throughout;—and unless you choose to explain the whole truth and reveal your fair friend, whether as fiend or angel,—prepare for my worst vengeance as a brother and an enemy."

"And can you really imagine," cried Frederica, "that I am sufficiently blind or indifferent to your interests to have any share in the plans and projects of such a person? You must apply to mamma, or Rawleigh, or the Lees, for any information you may require;—*I* have learned nothing on the subject, but that a blank card was procured for her from Lord Calder through the interference of Lady Sophia.

Had I been previously apprized of the fact, believe me nothing would have induced me to appear at the fête in connexion with an obscure adventurer, whose conduct naturally produces very unfavourable impressions of her character."

"Ladies, my dear sister, who live of their own free choice in intimate association with the Mrs. Erskynes and Lady Blanches of the day, would do well to moderate the ferocity of their prudery. You have nothing to urge against Lucy but her poverty, which compels her to accept a situation in our family unworthy her talents and her excellence."

"And which she prudently turns to account by entangling the affections of the son of her patroness, and accepting the caresses of her son-in-law!"

"What do you mean to insinuate, Frederica!" cried Lord Launceston starting from the sofa with an air of stern heroism which would have done infinite credit to his Pirate of the preceding night.

"To *insinuate*—nothing; but simply to assert that your immaculate Lucy was detected by two ladies—(not Mrs. Erskyne and Lady Blanche

but two women whose respectability equals their rank)—"

"Go on,—go on!—of what use is that idle parenthesis?—was detected, you say?"—

"—In the act of blushing her approval, while Sir Brooke Rawleigh covered her hand with kisses."

"Insolent blockhead!"

"Such are the consequences of familiarity with persons of Miss Elbany's intriguing character;—and you must at least allow me to doubt the propriety of admitting them into—"

"The chaste society of Lady Rochester! But pray what explanation does your husband offer for his folly?"

"I have sought none; having been bound by a promise to my informant to take no further steps in the affair."

"I always entertain the worst opinion of your sneaking, hypocritical, prosing, proper-behaved gentlemen!" cried Launceston in a rage. "Were I not fettered by my unfortunate engagements to the Waddlestone family—"

"Unfortunate!" interrupted his sister. "Leo-

nora is only too good and too charming to be sacrificed in a manner so unworthy."

"By Heavens! she is an angel!" exclaimed Launceston, in the honesty of his enthusiasm. "But believe me—"

No further demand, however, was destined to be made on Lady Rawleigh's credence;—for at that moment, Sir Brooke burst into the room,—his face as white as death,—his lips quivering;—and with an air as little "sneaking, hypocritical, or prosaic," as that of the most *im*proper-behaved gentleman in London. Launceston, who had cherished a strong previous inclination to knock him down on occasion of their first encounter, was actually startled into silence by his obvious distress and agitation.

"May I inquire," said the disordered baronet, addressing Frederica in a low but concentrated voice, "whether you can remember to whom you paid the bill and bank-note you received from Ruggs?"

"To—to Lord Calder!" faltered Lady Rawleigh, growing almost as pale as her husband.

"I thank you," replied Sir Brooke, placing

himself in a chair from mere inability to stand. "I thank you for your prompt candour;—I thank you, Frederica, for your consideration for my honour,—your tenderness for your own reputation;—your self-denial amid the temptations of society;—your eagerness to deserve my confidence. I thank you,—I thank you," he cried—involuntarily smiting his forehead with his clenched hand—"for showing me to the whole world as the poor, degraded, miserable fool I am!"—

"What the devil do you mean!" cried the intemperate Launceston,—his previous displeasure excited to fury by this inexplicable attack upon his sister. "If you have any serious charge to make against Lady Rawleigh,—I am here,—ready to—"

"Launceston!" said Sir Brooke, with great feeling and some dignity, "This is no time for foolish bluster. Had Frederica's conduct incurred what *you* would call a serious charge, or if I used the word dishonour in its worst sense,—you had not found me in her presence or in your's;—we could not have met again

under this roof. But when I find my wife engaged in secret transactions of a pecuniary nature with a man of the most notoriously licentious character—"

"Allow me to say, Sir," cried Lord Launceston,—perceiving that Frederica was incapable of uttering a syllable,—"that there is nothing peculiarly secret in an affair transacted under the observation of some two hundred individuals. However blamable my sister's losses at play, they were incurred in the presence of the whole party at Ash Bank, and in some degree at the instigation, or through the folly of Lady Olivia."

"PLAY!" murmured poor Rawleigh,—who had long looked upon écarté as one of the darling snares spread by Satan for the entrapment of womankind. "*My* wife a gambler!—Lady Rawleigh branded with the shame of so gross a vice!" and he literally shuddered at the idea.

"A single error,—a solitary inadvertence,—repented of, and unrepeated, scarcely deserves this violence," said Lord Launceston, bluntly;

for his recent discovery of Rawleigh's peccadilloes served in a great measure to extenuate in *his* opinion the folly or criminality of his sister. "Frederica's indiscretion on this occasion—"

"Has sufficed," cried Sir Brooke, "to expose her to the censures of the world, and place an irrevocable stigma on her reputation. The whole affair must instantly become public. The servant to whom Lady Rawleigh intrusted the confidential letter containing the amount of her debts, has feloniously embezzled the money,—will die on the gallows;—while I—"

He paused;—for a deep groan and heavy fall on the floor, announced that poor Frederica had dropped from her seat in a state of insensibility!—

## CHAPTER VIII.



Mais que diable alloit-elle faire dans cette galère ?

MOLIERE.

THE explanation given by Sir Brooke Rawleigh to his impetuous brother-in-law, when the delinquent had recovered sufficiently to be removed to her own room and Mrs. Pasley's wondering sympathy, was somewhat more coherent, though by no means more satisfactory, than that which had proved so overwhelming to poor Lady Rawleigh.

It appeared that the identical Mr. Thomas who had dealt so unceremoniously with Mame-

luke's mouth, and even with Lord Launceston himself on occasion of Lord Calder's mysterious visit in the absence of Sir Brooke, was the servant delegated by his lady to convey her letter and enclosure to Calder-house: and that having been trained, as has been already observed, in services of the highest fashion, he was unwilling to remain ignorant on a point already so much in dispute in the various still-rooms and servants'-halls of his acquaintance, as the intimacy between "my lord" and "my lady." The under-housemaid in Bruton-street had expressed some curiosity on the subject; and Lord Calder's own man was by no means indifferent. In short, his deliberations ended with opening the letter; and after ceding to this first temptation,—in appropriating the contents to his own use!—Having thrown off Sir Brooke's livery on pretext of visiting a dying parent, and speedily dissipated the fifty and twenty-pound notes, Mr. Thomas was at length induced to present the bank-bill,—and was now in custody on suspicion of theft. Lady Rawleigh in her ignorance of business having

omitted to endorse the document, and the embezzler being unable to give a satisfactory account of the mode by which it came into his possession, he was detained for further investigation of the affair. "Frederica Rawleigh," in whose favour the bill was drawn, was accordingly summoned to appear in Bow-street; and eleven o'clock on the following morning was appointed by the solicitor to the Bank for the re-examination of the parties. Nothing in short could be more distressing than the publicity and peculiarities of the case; and Lord Launceston could not but sympathize in the profound mortification of his brother-in-law, on becoming first acquainted with his wife's indiscretions through so afflicting a channel.

But what were the feelings of poor Frederica herself, when having summoned her brother to her dressing-room, she was gradually and considerately made acquainted with the particulars of the affair! Her first grief naturally arose from finding herself the indirect cause of a fellow-creature's guilt,—a fellow-creature's ignominious death;—her next, from

her husband's deep and merited displeasure:—her last, from the discovery that Lord Calder's increased familiarity of demeanour towards her had proceeded from a belief that she was in his power,—his debtor without compunction or apology. Deeply did she loathe and repent the folly which had placed her in so dishonoured a position!

Nor was the business amended when, after a visit to Gray's-inn [redacted] poor Sir Brooke could not but revert to the motives of his frequent journeys towards that factory of "deeds without a name" during his pin-money-and-jointure deliberations the preceding year), the husband and brother ascertained that her ladyship's personal appearance was indispensable; and that Lord Calder himself would be required to give evidence and prosecute, as one of the defrauded parties!—Lord Launceston who felt, in spite of his constitutional levity and inconsideration, the urgent necessity of strict prudence in conducting the affair, and of adopting for Frederica's sake every measure likely to diminish its publicity, wisely laid

aside his repugnance to Calder House and its proprietor, and hastened thither to explain the dilemma, and request his lordship's co-operation. He found the garlands, and triumphal arches, and temporary orchestras in the act of removal, and the mansion still uncleared from its decorations of the preceding night. But Lord Launceston's name proved a spell insuring immediate admittance; and he was ushered into a little secluded book-room, untouched by the disorders of the recent fête, and at all times secure from the intrusion of worldly clamours and importunate visitors.

There is perhaps no moment in which the charm of high-breeding is so strongly felt, as that which compels a person to seek a concession from one by birth or accident his superior, whose goodwill he has never previously sought to conciliate. Lord Launceston was aware that he had demeaned himself, on many occasions, with singular ungraciousness towards the proprietor of the gorgeous palace and unpretending but exquisite chamber into which he was now introduced; but from the moment of Lord

Calder's entrance, he found himself not only placed perfectly at his ease, but taught to feel that he was conferring a favour by asking one. Launceston was truly and fervently attached to his sister!—Her marriage and his own engagements had, it is true, in some measure interfered with the course of their warm and exclusive attachment; and for some weeks past he had even begun to consider her more as the fashionable Lady Rawleigh, than as his own dear gentle little Frederica; but no sooner was she menaced with misinterpretation, and surrounded by vexations, than he remembered her only as the tender, timid, relying sister, who had loved him so fondly throughout her various stages of childhood, girlhood, and womanhood;—whose name, and fame, and heart's-blood were so intimately kindred with his own.

On finding, therefore, in Lord Calder, an eager participator in his anxiety to spare her feelings and render this unpleasant affair as private as possible, he experienced a momentary conviction that the courteous and well-bred brother of Lady Rochester was a far more civilized

member of the community, than that brother-in-law of his own, whom he had left behind in Bruton-street, raging and storming against the iniquities of écarté; and expressing a conscientious opinion that the interests of society ought not to be compromised by any remission of the rigours of the law towards so gross an abuser of trust as his felonious footman. Every thing appeared in Lord Calder's favour on such an occasion;—his assumed forgetfulness of the original debt, and of Lady Rawleigh's apparently wilful breach of promise of payment;—his easy mode of proposing an adjustment of the affair;—his indifference to public justice in comparison with the private feelings of an innocent woman;—his quiet tone and unexaggerated expressions of regret at the whole transaction;—all these superficial accomplishments acquired from the embarrassment of the moment an unusual degree of importance in the eyes of his visitor;—and Lord Launceston left the house with a newly-conceived prejudice in favour of those

Men of the world who know the world like men!

Having made an appointment to drive down with Lord Calder to Bow-street on the following morning, his next visit was addressed to a personage who, although what is termed a *woman* of the world, was in fact as little skilled in the arts and sciences of modern society, and as ill-qualified to enter into the manœuvres of the war of fashion, as Anna Boleyn to grace the lists of Almack's or Anne Askew to encounter the debates of a Tract Association. Nor was poor Launceston insensible to that deficiency of tact and the redundance of mental and bodily activity which rendered Lady Olivia Tadcaster so unsuitable a comforter to the sorrowful, or assistant to the perplexed. But he was unwilling to circulate the affair beyond the limits of his own family, or wholly to abandon Frederica to the angry counsels of Sir Brooke; and although satisfied that Lady Sophia Lee would have been a far more satisfactory companion to his sister, he was too well acquainted with the lofty spirit and scornful independence of that lady, to promote an altercation between her and Rawleigh. Lord Launceston rightly conjec-

tured that Lady Olivia's love of business-discussions, and predilection for the circumstantialities of life, would peremptorily divert his brother-in-law's attention and indignation from his wife and her offences.

He was secure, too, from all personal reluctance and awkwardness in communicating the business to his fussy aunt,—who had in some measure originated the mischief; and had his delicacy recoiled from the task, it would have been quickly reassured by the nature of Lady Olivia's comments on the transaction. After listening with due attention to the details of Frederica's misfortunes and misconduct, her ladyship exclaimed—"She certainly must have lost her senses!—Heavens!—that a niece of mine should venture two hundred and eighty pounds against an experienced player like Lord Calder;—and afterwards show herself so ignorant of business as to pay away a bank-bill without endorsement!"

But even Lord Launceston was little aware, when he left his sister to the exhortations of the aunt whom he had easily persuaded to ac-

company him back to Bruton-street, how often her self-upbraidings would be interrupted,—her anticipations of the criminal penalty incurred by the culprit answered, by—" But what in the name of wonder, my dear, could induce you to pay away a bank-bill without endorsement?"

Meanwhile his Lordship was not inactive. Through the mediation of Messrs. Marwill and Makewill, the examination of Thomas Cuthbert was appointed to be held in the magistrates' private room; and every thing was whispered by this kind brother to Lady Rawleigh in the course of the preceding evening, which could be supposed to dissipate her alarms. Sir Brooke was opportunely called away to the House by important business; while her brother seemed to have forgotten in Frederica's distress that there existed in the universe a Lucy or a Leonora, and to feel no hopes or fears beyond those in which her immediate interests were involved. He left her with an entreaty that she would restore her courage by a good night's rest, and a hope that the affair might be compromised

without further exposure; and Lady Olivia, whom he insisted on conducting to her carriage previous to his own departure, only added to his exhortation, "and pray, my dear niece, impress upon your recollection that you have caused all this embarrassment by omitting to endorse a bank-bill."

Lady Rawleigh's tribulations on the morrow began at an early hour. In spite of all her hints, Launceston had persisted in intercepting an interview between the husband and wife, by inviting the lady of Ash Bank to breakfast with his sister and support her by matronly countenance during her visit to Bow-street; and so seldom in the course of her aristocratical existence had Lady Olivia been blest by an occasion to penetrate into an atmosphere so congenial with her taste as that of a magistrate's private room,—or to enjoy the exciting prospect of hanging a dishonest footman,—that she would not listen to the excuses of her niece. Before nine of the clock she found her way to Frederica's bedside; to commiserate her swollen eye-

lids and pallid cheeks, and to remind her again and again of the absurdity of forgetting to endorse a bank-bill.

But Lady Rawleigh was scarcely conscious of her aunt's superfluous iteration of the charge! She could think of nothing but her coming humiliations; from her first encounter with an offended husband, to her final appearance before an implacable dispenser of the law. She was not aware that during Lady Olivia's tête-à-tête dinner with Sir Brooke the preceding day her elaborate details of the écarté affair at Ash Bank had in a great measure tended to exculpate her niece; and that although he could pin no very sure reliance on the representations of a woman who considered the non-endorsement of Ruggs's bill the chief source of vexation in the case, he was now satisfied that his wife was neither an habitual nor a clandestine gambler; that she had been decoyed to the écarté-table in obedience to her aunt; and had communicated the disastrous result to more than one member of her own family. The precarious state of Lady Launceston's health would have

rendered it as injudicious to consult *her* on the original, as on the present occasion;—and as to himself—the meditations of four-and-twenty hours convinced him that his recent demeanour towards Frederica had been very ill calculated to conciliate her confidence and smooth the path of confession.

His displeasure being mollified by these considerations, he met her with a brow less moody and an address less frigid than she had anticipated. During their unpleasant drive to Bow-street, the few words that passed between them were of a friendly nature; and both parties were too deeply engrossed, to resent or answer Lady Olivia's cuckoo admonitions to her niece on the subject of an accurate endorsement of all future bank-bills.

"The only use of a bank-bill, my dear," said she, as the carriage stopped before a dirty entrance, redolent of gin and tobacco, surrounded by a human group personifying the seven deadly sins seven times repeated, and guarded by one or two officers with eyes as keen as lynxes, and hands as brisk and active as those of a ring-

tailed Maucauca—" the only use, my dear Frederica, of a bank-bill, is to secure from fraud all private money-transactions between persons at a distance. Had you endorsed that bill, or if Mr. Ruggs had done his duty by instructing you on the subject—"

" This way, ladies, if you please!—The gemmen and the 'torneys is a waiting!" interrupted an officer with a staff, or rather a staff with an officer,—for the virtue of office appeared peculiarly resident in the baton; and after groping their way through a fœtid passage, Frederica found her hand pressed in her brother's,—while Lord Calder silently placed a chair for her accommodation in the least ostensible corner of the room, from whence her replies could be made audible in the proper quarter. For some minutes, indeed, both the room and its inmates became indistinguishable to her swimming eyes; while her bosom panted as though the heart within would burst its bounds. But Frederica had promised herself to repress her emotions,—to exert her utmost efforts to evade a scene of feminine weakness on so unpromising a stage,—

and if possible, collect her courage sufficiently to yield all the evidence in her power in favour of the wretched delinquent. On recovering her self-possession, she perceived the unhappy man standing opposite, closely attended by two familiars of the office, and wearing on his livid lips and sallow brow strong accusations of vice, if not of crime;—the leprosy of sin had already put its mark upon his hardened face!—Frederica felt her heart grow sick at the mere sight of the man.—For many months past he had been her habitual attendant. She had seen him last in the trimly array and powdered neatness peculiar to the menials of a respectable establishment; and already he had contracted that swaggering air of brutality which is the unfailing concomitant of low debauchery. Involuntarily the idea presented itself to her mind of the hangman busy with the miserable being before her;—and of a wife, a child, a mother, or a friend, torn in agony from his arms.—With difficulty she repressed the shriek that rosé to her lips; wringing her hands in the terrible conviction that her folly had been the inad-

vertent cause of all this guilt,—of this appalling retribution!

The tissue of fashionable life is of so flimsy and artificial a texture,— so little of reality exists in the position, sentiments, and apprehensions of the lordly community, that crimes and punishments assume an ideal and visionary character in the eyes of its members. They read or hear of criminal justice,—of the pangs of hunger,—of theft, conviction, sentence and execution,—and regard the whole as a melodramatic source of sympathy and horror. The burglar, the forger, and the incendiary have no stronger individuality in their conception than the Mr. Beverleys and George Barnwells, in whose behalf their cambric handkerchiefs are moistened at the theatre;—their own hearts are too buoyant, their own destinies too unsubstantial, to impart a belief in the tangible existence of want, and crime, and judgment.

But when a person hitherto surrounded by the sparkling and unreal brilliancy of unqualified prosperity, stumbles by chance on some of those terrible monuments which suggest the

positive exisience of penury and suffering,—of criminality and condemnation,—the impression is indeed powerful. Sickness and danger are generally the sole monitors which speak home to the breasts of the rich and great touching their own responsibility, and the equality of all created beings in the eyes of the Creator; but a malefactor incited to guilt through their own carelessness or bad example,—a life forfeited to the law of the land and unredeemable by their utmost efforts and intercessions,—is a lesson of more than common severity. Lady Rawleigh, who would not willingly have caused the extermination of a fly, felt with a thrill of icy horror that she was about to plunge a fellow-creature into the dread abyss of eternity!—

Under this awful impression of the critical importance of the scene, it may be imagined with what amazement she found her attention facetiously claimed by a gentleman in a rusty black coat, very indifferently furnished with his Majesty's English, and very superabundantly endowed with his Majesty's authority. In honour of the distinguished audience gracing

his presence, he had prepared an unusual stock of jocularity and repartee for the occasion; and it was not till he had been in some degree influenced by the chilling dignity of Lord Calder's address that he found it wise to restrict himself within the bounds of an amiable candour and impartiality;—calling the prisoner "my friend," instead of "fellow;"—and Lord Calder "my lud," instead of "this noble and injured individooal."

But as few minor officials emulate the originality and comicality of the Procurator Fiscal and Daddie Rat, it may be as well to leave the tribunal of the Heart of Mid Lothian in solitary but triumphant possession of the field of fiction.—Lady Olivia, it is true, exhibited in her proper person at once the pragmatical officiousness of Saddletree, and the demented incoherence of Madge Wildfire; and to many persons,—Lord Calder in particular,—Frederica herself might have rivalled the attractions of either Effie or Jeannie Deans. But his lordship, as he gazed upon her silently-dropping tears, and marble immobility, was far

more tempted to compare her with Byron's description of Prince Azo's guilty wife;—more especially when, on learning that the examination was postponed and the prisoner remanded till a future day to enable Mr. Ruggs to make his appearance and identify the bill, as well as for the determination of some legal doubts as to the extent of Cuthbert's amenability to the law, —she suddenly clasped her hands together, and uttered an unconscious prayer that the culprit's life might be secured through the informality thus suggested!—

## CHAPTER IX.

Scandal, a busy fiend, in Truth's disguise,
Like Fame, all cover'd o'er with ears and eyes,
Learns the fond tale, and spreads it as she flies:
Nor spreads alone, but alters, adds, defames;—
Affects to pity, though her duty blames;
Pretends to weigh the fact in even scale,
And wish, at least, that justice may prevail;
Insinuates, dissembles, lies, betrays—
Plays the whole hypocrite such various ways,
That innocence itself must suffer wrong,
And honour bleed, the prey of Slander's tongue.

SOAME JENYNS.

FREDERICA was still lying on the feverish couch to which she had been consigned on her return from the police-office, when towards evening the following note from Lord Calder was placed in her hands:

"Dear Lady Rawleigh,

"The amiable solicitude you expressed this morning for the fate of Thomas Cuthbert, has induced me to consult several eminent professional men in his behalf; and three leading counsel, as well as my friends the Vice-Chancellor and Attorney-General, having given it as their opinion that the bill, without endorsement, was an invalid document and destitute of any real value, the solicitor of the Bank has withdrawn his charge. With very sincere regret that this unpleasant business should have caused you one moment's concern,

I am, dear Madam,

Your ladyship's obedient servant,

CALDER."

"Calder House, Saturday."

The transition of feeling arising from the welcome intelligence thus kindly imparted, was almost too much for Frederica's gentle frame, already shaken by the vicissitudes of three eventful days and the vigils of three sleepless

nights. Her tears burst forth with hysterical violence;—she pressed to her heart the official papers enclosed by Lord Calder in corroboration of his statement;—and uttered a thousand incoherent exclamations. She was no longer capable of self-restraint, and her mind became involved in darkness. Her latest remembrance was that of strangers surrounding her bedside; and when her consciousness was fully restored, she found that a night and a day had elapsed in feverish delirium, and that her brother and husband were affectionately watching the progress of her recovery.

"I have been lightheaded—have I not?" she faintly exclaimed; involuntarily extending her hand to Sir Brooke, who very voluntarily, and very tenderly pressed it to his lips, imploring her to desist from all agitating inquiries.

"No—no!—I am well and happy now;—all my pains and troubles are over!" faltered Frederica. "I feel as if I had passed through some great danger,—or experienced some severe affliction.—Let me see—ah! I re-

member now—I recollect it all now.—After all, it *was* no dream!"

And she hid her face with her hands while Rawleigh again implored her to dismiss the past from her thoughts; and her brother still more judiciously began to introduce topics of general conversation;—to talk to her of Lady Launceston's health,—of Lady Olivia's project of a tour to St. Petersburg,—and of Lady Twadell's report that Lord Trevelyan had actually arrived in England.—Lady Rawleigh, grateful for his efforts to withdraw her attention from herself, tried to appear interested in these announcements; and with her eyes fixed upon the altered and kindly expression of her husband's countenance, enjoyed all that languid sensation of convalescence which the release from pain, and gratitude for the interest it has excited in those we love, render so exquisitely delightful.

Meanwhile Rumour, with her thousand lying tongues, had not been inactive. The season was drawing near its close, without having afforded anything very striking either in the

way of gaiety or scandal. The Faëry masque was not only over, but had already become an obsolete theme,—and nothing promising remained in prospect but the *elettissimo* breakfast at Waddlestone House;—Lady A. was dead, Lady B. divorced, and both forgotten,—and nothing animating appeared in view but the martyrdom of the lovely Lady Rawleigh of Rawleighford. Even her intimate associates might be forgiven some little eagerness for the struggle, for should she escape the amphitheatre unhurt by the venomed fangs of the "blatant beast,"—untransfixed by the javelin of scandal,—they had not the least chance of any other source of diversion or excitement previous to their mournful departure to the domestic happiness of their divers country seats!—

Under these circumstances, it is not wonderful that Lady Blanche's Thornton's maid on calling to inquire of Mrs. Pasley "quite promiscuously," whether it was true that they were to have the pleasure of meeting at Leamington previous to the Warwick races, should lend an eager ear to the account of "my lady's sudden

seizure all along of them low fellows the footmen opening a confidential letter addressed by her ladyship to Lord Calder,"—and a magnifying tongue to her own repetition of the story in Belgrave-square;—or that Mr. Indice on meeting Lord Calder and Launceston at the premature hour of eleven, ensconced in the mysterious dark green chariot, should have suspected a duel, followed them in his cabriolet to Bow-street, and propagated a whisper on his return to White's that Lady Rawleigh, under the countenance of her brother and aunt, and supported by the testimony of Lord Calder, had been exhibiting articles of the peace against her husband! In the dog-days scandal, like every other pestilence, becomes imminently contagious; and long before Thomas Cuthbert's sentence of enlargement was pronounced, Frederica was condemned, executed, and given over to Surgeons' Hall by a jury of her fashionable friends; whose forewoman—Mrs. William Erskyne,—affected to weep while she delivered the impartial verdict!—

Lady Sophia Lee, however, was too slightly

entangled in the meshes of the great world, to be either implicated or interested in this decree of the court. She knew nothing of Lady Rawleigh's disastrous adventures; and attributed her avoidance of their daily ride to Frederica's displeasure at her interference in the Elbany affair. Engrossed just then by important business of her own, she had no leisure to offer the necessary explanations; but having occasion to call in Charles-street, was quite satisfied with Lady Launceston's repetition of the tale she had received from her son, that "Fred. had caught a slight cold at Calder House, and was nursing it for the Waddlestone breakfast," without attempting to sooth down, by premature importunity, the resentment of her cousin Brooke's indignant dame.

Great therefore was her amazement and distress when on the third day following the masque, the first tidings of the affair reached her per threepenny post, and per pen of Sophronia of Twickenham.—Lady Twadell, restless to display her new emblazonments, having joined in unharmonious union her Woodington

pair of bays to the Viscount's pair of blacks, and converted her second coachman and his lordship's second footman into lumbering postillions, was making the tour of the suburbs in what she considered an imposing degree of bridal splendour; and after trying the cold chicken and sandwiches of Wimbledon and Rochampton, Hampstead and Hammersmith, had actually thought fit to travel as far as Lady Derenzy's villa, in order to improve her illuminated edition of Lady Rawleigh's disgrace. Unluckily, Sophronia had not a word to add in the way of annotation. Her latest intelligence of her niece had been derived from Lord George Madrigal, who in his account of Lord Calder's fête had represented Frederica as

The obtherved of all obtherverth;

and from Lady Lavinia Lisle, who asserted her to have been the ruling planet of the evening. Having loftily reproved the tittle-tattle of the little viscountess whom she abhorred as a *parvenue*, Lady Derenzy followed up her lecture by inflicting an epistle of two sheets and an en-

velope, upon her quondam pupil, Lady Sophia; containing some immeasurable sentences of the description called rigmarole which involved the "dignity of the order,—the purity of the sex,—the spotlessness of the female character,—the folly of women who *commit themselves by writing letters*,—and the imperative necessity of hanging all footmen who open them."

The Rosetta stone could not have been more unintelligible to Lady Sophia! Her first impulse was to fly to Bruton-street, and demand a key to the hieroglyphics; and she was speedily rewarded for her reliance on her friend's good faith, by the fervour with which the still-agitated Frederica threw herself into her arms, and relieved her heart and mind by relating every particular of the affair. Her auditress did not, however, consider it necessary to emulate this amiable frankness. She was not one of those candid and agreeable persons who think it their duty that every individual should be made acquainted with every individual slander invented to their discredit; and was too well aware of the gentleness and timidity of Frederica's dis-

position to grieve her by the recapitulation of Lady Twadell's romances, or Lady Derenzy's rhodomontade. But Lady Sophia was not the less persuaded that the world in general had already accepted in its worst sense and stamped into currency, the history of the letter; and was therefore anxious, without wounding the feelings of Lady Rawleigh, to exert such an influence over her demeanour towards Lord Calder, as might restrain her from all public demonstrations of gratitude towards him, as well as from all evidence of private pique.

"Could you have imagined," cried Frederica, on the conclusion of her narrative, "that Calder would lay aside his apathy and selfishness, and exert himself with such promptitude in favour of a servant?"

"To forward his own ends, he would have taken as much trouble for a turnspit. Be careful, dearest Fred., be careful that he is not too amply rewarded for the effort."

"Do not alarm yourself.—Rawleigh, who by some unlucky genius for misconception, sees

all his actions *en noir*, has made it a point with me that our acquaintance should terminate as soon as possible.—Dynley, or Lexley, or Indice, or some other of his tiresome club-associates, have been careful to instil into his mind a belief that his dignity and authority as a husband, depend on his insulting Lord Calder by excluding him from our house."

"Dynley and Indice form a dose of bitters, which the hypochondriacs of fashion seem to inflict on themselves as a universal panacea.—But like other physic, I shall take care that they are thrown to the dogs."

"You will interfere to no good purpose. There appears a kind of hereditary feud between yourself and Rawleigh, which strengthens him in all the prejudices you oppose."

"The man is a blockhead;—I tell him wholesome truths, and he cannot swallow them. But on this occasion I shall insist on his treating Lord Calder with becoming courtesy."

"My dear Lady Sophia, believe me your influence is insufficient to work such a miracle"

"*My* influence?—I would not rely on it to determine his choice of a new waistcoat!—Oh, no!—you shall have a much more potent auxiliary. I shall secure the interference of a person who has the greatest weight with Sir Brooke;—one who will not allow him to trifle with your happiness and his own."

Frederica started!—There was no mistaking the inference;—there was no possibility of doubting that Miss Elbany's influence over her husband was about to be propitiated in her favour.—Her spirit recoiled from such a degradation!

"I thank you!—I have no doubt you mean to act kindly by me," said she with a sudden refrigeration of manner, "but I am satisfied that when a woman requires the advocation of a partizan to mediate between herself and her husband, her cause is naught!"

"What a jealous little soul it is!" said Lady Sophia, who was already preparing for departure, and now approached to pat her cheek with a most provoking air of superiority. "Won't it accept the assistance of such a shabby piece of goods as its mamma's com-

panion?—won't it receive a favour from its brother's idol,—from its future sister-in-law?"—

"Miss Elbany *my* sister-in-law?" cried Frederica; "never!"

"*Si fait!*—as sure as you are in a violent rage at this very moment."

"Do you—can you—mean to say that you anticipate such disgrace for Launceston and his family as the triumph of that low designing adventurer?"

"I mean to say that I, at least, will leave no measure unattempted to secure the event!—Good bye—good bye;—I leave you to all the sublimity of your indignation and to the perusal of yonder trilateral billet. Preserve me from the marivaudage which requires pink satin paper to make it palatable."

She hastened away as she uttered these words; and if any thing could tend to augment the vexation which they excited in the mind of Lady Rawleigh, it would have been the impertinence of the following lines:

"Brook-street, July——1829.

"DEAR LADY RAWLEIGH,

"An unpleasant report having reached me that a sum of money forwarded to you by our friend Lord Calder has fallen into your husband's hands, or been stolen by one of your servants, I am apprehensive it may have some reference to the demand I made on you the other evening. I trust you will excuse me for reminding you that I am not only responsible for the amount, but that it will be a great inconvenience and disgrace to me to have the payment delayed; and must therefore beg you to make some arrangements with Sir Brooke on the subject, as soon as possible.

I am, dear Lady Rawleigh,

Truly yours,

L. ERSKYNE."

Fortunately for Frederica's patience, Martin had already announced that the bearer of this gracious epistle did not wait for an answer; and she was therefore secure of delay for the sub-

jugation of her anger and the arrangement of her finances. But as she paced the room for the better despatch of this double labour, how grieved, how debased in her own eyes, how harassed in mind, body and estate did the spendthrift feel amid her self rebukings.—Money! —she who had so often contemned the wisdom of the worldly,—the paltry avarice of the narrow-minded,—the base propensities of the interested,—what penalty would she not have endured, what sacrifice would she not have made for the secret acquisition of a few hundred pounds?—Oh! grievous destitution of modern times! Vainly does the bankrupt sigh and the pauper groan!—No Mercury now brings up a golden hatchet from the fountain,—no Rübezahl starts forth amid the fern with a purse of ducats,—no Aboulcasem opens the vault of his hidden treasure,—no Mephistopheles whispers his demoniacal bargain!—Money,—even with the unspiritual drawback of five per cent., is sufficiently difficult of attainment; and instead of tempters with bags of gold appearing at every turn, a banker grim and im-

permeable as his own iron chest, secures our souls from perdition and our dividends from anticipation.—It was well for poor Frederica that Number Nip turned a deaf ear to her invocations!—

After feverishly revolving in her mind the difficulties of the case, she resolved to address a private letter to Obadiah Ruggs, requesting him to advance the sum of one hundred pounds, which would become due to her in the course of ten days; and apply to her mother for a loan of the remaining sixty-five immediately in request. She trusted the statuary would be satisfied with her promise of payment in November, and that no extraordinary demands would arise upon her pocket-money. She, who had never in her life experienced a deficiency of this description, flattered herself that she should be able to get through *three* months without a single guinea! She,

> Whose kindly-melting heart,
> To every want, to every woe,—
> To guilt itself, when in distress,—
> The balm of pity would impart,
> And all relief that bounty can bestow,

fancied she could close her ears against the murmurs and grievances of all the rheumatic dames, and paralytic gaffers, her habitual pensioners in the green lanes and scattered hovels of her own dear Rawleighford!—Alas! poor Frederica!—She little imagined that her keeper of the privy purse had already a list of unpaid memoranda against her, for ribbons, needles, and all the contemptible nothings of the lady's-maid's department, to the amount of twenty pounds; and that her standing bills,—but it is needless to anticipate.

Lord Launceston and Sir Brooke, meanwhile, had exacted a promise that she would pass the evening in Charles-street to satisfy the anxieties of the dowager touching her cold; and Lady Launceston, with all her medical skill, might be excused for giving full faith to this supposititious malady, when she looked in Frederica's face and noticed the havoc which four days of unequalled anxiety had wrought in its expression. So haggard were her looks, her eyes so lustreless, her voice so tremulous, that

her mother was almost tempted to inquire whether she had been rash enough to hold any further intercourse, through Lady Olivia, with Captain Mopsley and the good ship the Scarmouth Castle.

On this point, her ladyship's doubts might have been amply resolved; for scarcely were they seated for the evening,—Sir Brooke and Launceston paired off on one sofa, and Frederica reclining on the other beside the invalid, listening to a history of a dispute between Chloe and the housekeeper's cat,—when a rustling on the stairs announced a visitor, and in bustled Lady Olivia, with her country neighbours the two Miss Peewits. The gentlemen whisperingly exchanged certain impolite aspirations for their transfer to some unrecordable spot,—and Lady Rawleigh silently wished them all three in a better place. But poor Lady Launceston had a gracious word and smile for all her visitors, and sympathized very kindly in the motive of these Essex worthies for visiting the metropolis;—for in spite of Lady Olivia's

gift of green spectacles, Miss Peewit was come to consult an oculist, and Miss Maria was bent on a private audience with Cartwright.

"You see, my dear," said Lady Olivia to her niece, as soon as her two friends had launched into these interesting explanations with their hostess, "I really did not know what to do with them, or you would not have seen me here to-night. I could not take them with me to old Lady Buntingford's where I was engaged to a conversazione, because they have no pretensions to blue-ism, and it happens not to be one of her Saints'-days. I wrote a note to Lord Calder, to ask him for his box at the English Opera,—but Mrs. Erskyne had been beforehand with me; and it was out of the question remaining at home,—for my house is completely *en papillote* preparatory to my departure from town; —every room papered up but my own dressing-room. So I persuaded them I was pre-engaged to my sister."

"Mamma is very glad to see them;—particularly as they come on an errand of health," replied Frederica, listlessly.

"I wish she would take it into her head to ask them to dine with her to-morrow," said the calculating Lady Olivia; "for what to do with them I know not! You see we are all engaged to the concert and *déjeûner à la fourchette* at Waddlestone House; and now that Mrs. Woodington is married, I have no convenient friend on whom I can take the liberty of quartering them. I have provided for their morning's amusement by getting an order for Lord Calder's picture-gallery;—but as to the dinner part of the business I am completely puzzled!"

"What is this history of Lady Twadell's," inquired Frederica, anxious to evade the detail of her ladyship's shabby manœuvres, "relative to my uncle Trevelyan's arrival in England?—Do you imagine that he has heard of Launceston's engagement to Miss Waddlestone, and wishes for an explanation?"

"Lady Twadell is a very gossiping, officious little woman," said Lady Olivia, angrily. "She is so vexed by her own designs on my nephew proving abortive, that she cannot rest without circulating these mischievous inventions."

"She is only responsible for announcing the fact;—the motive was suggested by myself. But surely my uncle or Mary would have written to announce their intention?"

"Your uncle and Mary are beyond my comprehension, or that of any other reasonable being. To say the truth, my dear Frederica, I have very great reason to complain of both. After my father's death, I had a nine years' Chancery suit with Trevelyan; and although it was given against me with costs, no person has ever doubted that I was scandalously used, and fully justifiable in my claims. My brother, however, thought proper to resent them, and make my perseverance the excuse for a personal quarrel; while your father amused himself by calling me the Widow Blackacre."

"But all that affair has been long ended and forgotten," said Lady Rawleigh, trembling in anticipation of the well-known memoirs of that terrible Chancery suit.

"Not at all, my dear, not at all!—Trevelyan has taken care to avoid me ever since. Although we were in Italy together thirteen months, he

always managed to cross me on the road; to be in Sicily when I was at Naples;—at Pisa when I was at Rome. Lady Mary, it is true, keeps up a formal correspondence with me; but I have never seen my niece since she was eight years old. Well, Fred, *tel perd, tel gagne!*—*you* will be the better for it!—Since Lord Trevelyan and his daughter have chosen to make a stranger of me, they will find that—But, my dear love, I have never seen you since the termination of that abominable transaction concerning Thomas Cuthbert!—Was there ever any thing so unfortunate as your omitting to endorse the bill?—Pray let it be a warning to you another time. If you had only written your name on the back,—as any person in their senses would have done, and as that Mr. Muggs ought certainly to have instructed you to do,—there is not the smallest doubt but you might have hanged the fellow."

"Hush! my dear aunt," faltered Lady Rawleigh, "I would not for worlds have Mamma distressed by hearing a word on such a subject."

"Oh! you have nothing to fear!—She is ab-

sorbed in Clara Peewit's account of an inflammatory face-ache she caught in the hard winter of 1826;—hark!—they are very busy with the ingredients of the embrocation. Well, my love, as I was saying, Mr. Marwill assures me that had you only endorsed the bill, Cuthbert was a lost man. I own I think it a scandalous thing that such a villain should be allowed to escape;—a footman who not only opens a confidential letter, but embezzles a large sum of money!—Which of us is safe?—It might be my case, you know, to-morrow;—and I have considered it my duty to the community at large, to address a letter to the Attorney-General, inquiring whether there is no law to which he might still be made amenable."

"Oh! my dear aunt!"

"And Marwill has drawn up the case for counsel's opinion. I must say I think it was rather officious on Lord Calder's part, to act in the business without consulting any of the family: and the first time I see him I shall certainly hint my opinion that, as I acted as your personal adviser on the occasion, he might as

well have paid me the compliment of ascertaining my views. In fact, it is too provoking that the fellow should have escaped punishment through the interference of a perfect stranger; and I shall make it a point to tell him so."

"Let me implore you to allow the subject to drop!—Promise me, my dear aunt, that—"

"Miss Peewit, my dear!—don't you find those candles too much for your poor eyes?—I have no doubt Wrightson could find you a shade, or a screen; or my nephew will give you up his place on the sofa.—Launceston!—make room for Miss Peewit by Sir Brooke."

But neither party seemed inclined to profit by the hint. Poor blinking Miss Peewit was in the seventh heaven of namby-pamby with her valetudinarian hostess; Lord Launceston was asking Sir Brooke's advice relative to a new mortgage on the Marston estate; and neither had the least inclination to be marched or countermarched for the gratification of her ladyship's whims.

"There is one point in which I really *must* expostulate with Sir Brooke," resumed Lady

Olivia, clinging to the gratifying subject of Thomas and his felonious intentions. "Before he left the office I saw him present Lord Calder with a cheque for two hundred and eighty pounds. Now although the two hundred pound bank-bill is still in your husband's possession and available, the eighty pounds in notes is gone and spent;—and if he chooses to prosecute Cuthbert for a breach of trust, he would not only have a chance of recovering the money but be enabled to transport the wretch for life; or perhaps—who knows—to hang him after all! —I *must* have a little conversation with Rawleigh."

"If you love me, my dear aunt, do not utter one syllable further on the subject; which is a most distressing one both to my husband and myself."

But Frederica's cheeks became flushed with the deepest crimson at this further discovery of pecuniary involvement. She had hitherto overlooked the circumstance of the deficit of eighty pounds,—and had every reason to apprehend that Sir Brooke, in his business-like view of

the case, intended to apply the next quarter of her pin money to its re-imbursement!

Here then was an end of all her hopes of the hundred pounds to be advanced by Mister Obadiah Ruggs!—

## CHAPTER X.

No common coxcomb must be mentioned here,
Nor the dull train of dancing sparks appear!
Nor fluttering officers who never fight;—
Of such a wretched rabble who would write?

SHEFFIELD, DUKE OF BUCKINGHAM.

HUNGER, and cold, and nakedness, are undoubtedly among the most unwelcome casualties of human life, and both painful and difficult of endurance. But the pauperism of high life is not without an agony of its own; and whatever may be said in favour of the luxury of woe, the woes of luxury are by no means less acute than those we find concomitant with the squalor of plebeian wretchedness. There is a sentiment of personal shame connected

with the destitution of fine ladies and fine gentlemen with fine feelings!—it is such a manifest self-accusation to plead poverty in excuse for the delayed payment of a bill incurred in all the wantonness of an overflowing purse,—that the eye quails and the voice falters before the appalling presence of the humble individual to whom so vile a plea is tendered.—"Inconvenient at the present moment,"—"disappointment in my rents,"—"unexpected calls on my ready money,"—are pretty generally recognised as the mere lame apologies of unjustifiable prodigality!—

But Frederica Rawleigh was more than commonly sensitive to the dishonour of such proceedings. Educated by a mother who, notwithstanding the seeming indolence and listlessness of her mode of life, maintained the strictest regularity in her domestic affairs,—and in spite of a seeming inanity of mind, fulfilled with righteous diligence every duty of her sex,—she had been wholly unused to the sight of disorder, or to the anxieties of pecuniary embarrassment. She had never, it is true, been

dinned with lectures on extravagance; but had received a still better lesson in the orderly simplicity of Lady Launceston's habits; while those in which she had been personally trained were such as to render wasteful profusion an evidence of madness in her estimation rather than a fault.

And she was now to endure the self-conviction of this error of judgment, in all its multiplicious martyrdom !—Circumstances unnoticed before, began to start up in frightful prominence for her accusation; and a thousand trifles light as air grew oppressive with the leaden weight affixed by conscience to their insignificance. On arriving at home after her unsatisfactory explanation with Lady Olivia, she found three letters lying on the hall-table, closed in all the commercial odium of waferhood, and bearing her superscription flourished in all the suspicious perfection of the clerkly art. At any other time they would have been mechanically opened and thrown aside; but now, a cold dew moistened her brow as the horrors of an unpaid and unpayable bill first occurred to her

imagination: and she not only conveyed them unexamined as far as her dressing-room, but actually waited to be relieved from Mrs. Pasley's inquisition, before she ventured to unclose the dreaded page for the perusal of those tremendous perpendicular columns—marshalled in the fatal array of red ink, and dated with accurate and insulting minuteness,—which show more terrible to the eye of the prodigal than the columns of the British forces to the imperial fugitive of Waterloo!—

On the present occasion Lady Rawleigh's alarms were superfluous!—The first of these wafered envelopes contained a lithographic address from a ready-money tailor,—setting forth peculiar inducements of thrift in the purchase of livery-coats and velveteens;—the second was a satin-paper circular from a fashionable library, professing to circulate all the new works on the day of publication, or in other words, to supply three hundred copies of every idle novel to its three hundred grateful subscribers;—the third contained a card from Messrs. Stubble and Bubble, hosiers, drapers, silk-mercers, and

haberdashers, thanking her ladyship for the liberality of her past favours, (which she had very unwittingly bestowed,) and soliciting her further attention to their new stock, on their new premises, 16, William-street, Clerkenwell;—a locale with which she was very unlikely to become acquainted, unless in her accidental participation of some of Lady Olivia's obliquitous travels through the metropolis.

Frederica flung aside these mockeries of her distress, debased in spirit by the perturbation they had so innocently originated.—But that perturbation, and the reflection to which it gave birth, sufficed to destroy her rest. Her pillow had at length acquired the disquieting uneasiness inseparable from a troubled spirit: she felt that a crisis was at hand. She felt that she must either endure the prolonged mortification of pecuniary involvement, with all its attendant irritations, or the still sharper pang of degrading herself in the eyes of those she loved,—of those who loved *her*,—by an acknowledgment of her weakness, and an appeal to their tender affection. "Oh! that horrible pin money!"

murmured she, in the feverish restlessness of her nocturnal reflections. "Had I found it necessary to have recourse to Rawleigh for the detailed payment of my debts,—had full and entire confidence been established between us in the defrayment of my personal expenses,—never, never should I have plunged into the excesses which embitter a destiny especially blest by Providence!" So absorbed was her spirit in these considerations, that she could find no interval to aggravate her distress by grieving over the unfriendly machinations of Lady Sophia in Miss Elbany's behalf.

Meanwhile Lord Launceston had not only turned a deaf ear to his sister's representation of her disinclination to appear at the Waddlestone House breakfast, but had appealed to her in the strongest terms against a selfish indulgence in her own on such an occasion. More intimately acquainted than herself with the calumnies which had been circulated, and the misrepresentations accredited, relative to her recent adventure, he was aware of the peremptory necessity that she should at once confront the world,—

the lying, slandering, malignant world of fashionable life,—supported by the countenance of her husband and brother, and sanctioned by the companionship of her female friends. He had very little indulgence for the sweet sensibilities of the female heart, or the debilities of the female frame;—for aromatic vinegar or salts,—hysterics or fainting-fits;—his sympathy in these interesting crises had long been blunted by the valetudinarian hypochondriacism of Charles-street. He had seen his mother survive the daily deaths of five-and-twenty years!

It was therefore settled that she should fulfil her engagement, and make her appearance at Kensington Gore with as much of her usual cheerfulness and beauty as could be artificially assumed. Launceston had already presented her with a beautiful dress, procured for the occasion through the united agency of Tadcaster, Bermingham, and Co., from the boudoir of Madame Céliane, and the studio of Madame Minette; and having determined to accompany his sister, Sir Brooke, and Lady Sophia on so interesting an occasion, he made his appearance

at the toilet of the former, professedly to insure her punctuality,—but in point of fact to maintain her failing courage. He seemed in the highest spirits;—complimented her on the delicacy of her complexion, and himself on the elegance of her costume;—uttered a thousand extravagant commendations of Mrs. Pasley's dexterity, a thousand ridiculous anticipations of Mrs. Waddlestone's *embarras de richesses* in finding her house full of duchesses,—and laughed and talked with exuberant gaiety. But a more penetrating eye or less pre-occupied mind than that of Lady Rawleigh, might have discerned a sort of unnatural flurry in all this animation.—There was a lurking anxiety lest he should be deficient in his part,—a hollow echo in his laugh which betrayed its factitious nature.—It was evident that he laboured to assume that boundless hilarity with which a brother might be supposed to escort a beloved sister into the splendid home of his plighted bride; without remembering that nature would have suggested in such a position nothing more than the listless tranquillity of a heart at ease.

Alas! how rarely amid the scenes of polished life are the surface and substance truly identified;—how seldom does the word on the lip, or the expression glancing in the eye, accord with the mighty feeling labouring within!—A diamond melts in the crucible,—but the exhalations emanating from its decomposition are not a degree more noble than those which arise from an ordinary conflagration;—the heart consumes away in secret corrosion,—but flippant wit and hollow laughter grace its martyrdom. Lord Launceston, in spite of his buoyant mirth, was enduring the bitter consciousness of the stigma on his sister's reputation; and the no less painful knowledge of his own hypocrisy in appearing publicly at Waddlestone House as the privileged lover of Leonora, while his thoughts and feelings, his hopes and fears, were exclusively centered in his devotion to the obscure Lucy Elbany.

Never were four persons less joyously inclined than those who progressed along the Knightsbridge-road on this occasion. Frederica's spirit was heavy with the oppression of her debts,

Sir Brooke's with that of her indiscretions; Lord Launceston felt that he was about to practise an unworthy deception, and Lady Sophia was intent on analyzing and detecting the real and relative sentiments of her companions. *Her* task of observation, indeed, was somewhat less painful than their's of self-reproach;—but if it did not render her sad, at least it made her grave. Not the slightest sympathy with this lugubrious quartette appeared, however, in the aspect of Waddlestone House. All that opulence and purity of taste could effect was visible in its arrangements; and neither heart-burnings nor discontent interrupted the harmony of its inhabitants.

It may be observed as a general axiom in the science of festification, that even in a sumptuous mansion, supported by the best establishment, the loftiest fortune, and the most illustrious connexions,—a great crowd is incompatible with perfect refinement. An entertainment of the grandiose order of hospitality cannot be perpetrated without numbers; for a magnificent suite of rooms, interspersed with scattered

groups, however radiant in themselves, assumes a character of dulness and desolation. Even the fastidious Calder had judged it necessary to assemble the mob of fashion, in order to give effect to his Faëry masque; but in unclosing for this single occasion the adamantine gates of his enchanted hall, he had found it impossible to baffle the intrusion of many unwelcome denizens of illustrious life;—the old,—the disagreeable,—the ill-dressed,—and the ill-looking.

But a *fête au jour* demands a very different style of arrangement;—a daylight crowd is absolutely repugnant to the eye!—The flushed cheek, and crushed dress, the moistened brow, and angry glance kindled by the consciousness of such distemperature, assume a most offensive reality when viewed through the uncompromising medium of summer sunshine; and however rural the character of the entertainment,—however beautiful the groves and parterres,—however elastic the velvet turf,—however glassy the waters and gay the galleys,—however shadowed the groves, and serpentine the shrubberies,—destined to allure and disperse the lovely

visitants according to the suggestions of their hamadryadal or naïadal predilections,—the hungry hour of refreshment infallibly reunites them into one gregarious mass; when the marquee or banqueting room is fated to display "the many-headed (and many-mouthed) monster-thing" in more than ordinary hideosity.

It was an experienced observation of these circumstances which induced Mr. W. to limit his number of guests to a single hundred;—twenty of them being distinguished foreigners invited by the Princesse de Guéménée,—twenty filtered from the elect of fashion by the Duchess of Whitehaven,—twenty more from the more formal class of the high nobility (or, as Lord Calder was pleased to call them, the ancient Druids) by Lady Wroxworth;—while the remaining forty were chosen by Leonora and her mother from her youngest, fairest, and most elegant friends,—and by the host from the sacred choir of literary men and artists of the higher order, whose consecrated mark of caste raises them to the aristocratic level. In venturing on so exclusive a limitation, Mr. W. was

more justifiable than almost any other person of a similar station. He had attained his supremacy of opulence without incurring obligations to a single individual besides his wife;—who, for his consolation, was the solitary scion of a scanty race. Even their remote connexions of a less pleasing kind had been broken off by a prolonged residence on the continent; and finding on his return that society

> Was all before him where to choose,

he had wisely selected his own circle among persons whose habits of life produce the polished surface of high-breeding, unruffled by the struggles and vexations of petty care;—whose early mental culture and deficiency of peremptory occupation peculiarly qualify their minds for the enjoyment of literature and the fine arts;—and who—whether from chivalrous inheritance or from the consciousness of standing in high places exposed to ken and comment,—are eminently distinguished by honourable dealings and candid and gentlemanly senti

ments. Let it not be supposed that we are servilely borrowing from Mrs. Waddlestone of Waddlestone House, her arguments in favour of lords *versus* commons. But Mr. W. is a favourite;—we are anxious to redeem the smallest of his actions from condemnation;—and moreover sincerely share his sentiment, that in the eyes of God all men are equal,—the labourer with his spade,—the prince with his sceptre,—but that in the eyes of man, eminence of station and eminence of intellect must ever form distinguishing endowments;—that moral virtues are of pretty even distribution throughout all classes of society;—but that the more pleasing qualifications of artificial life,—like the most exquisite flowers,—are forced into bloom by the factitious atmosphere of aristocratic cultivation.

The Rawleighs and Lady Sophia, aware of Mr. Waddlestone's refusal to join the party at Calder House, had not even contemplated the possibility of meeting Lady Rochester and her party at Kensington Gore; but the first person pointed out by Lord Launceston to his sister

on entering the saloon was Lord Calder,—wearing his most attractive demeanour, and engaged in earnest conversation with Sir Thomas Lawrence and a man of similar eminence in the literary world.

"Strange!" whispered Frederica to her companion. "I should have imagined him far too proud to accept the hospitalities of a person who declines his own!"—

"You are a little dunce!—Such is the very motive of his appearance here. Calder's pride prompts him to the condescension of visiting Mr. Waddlestone;—Mr. Waddlestone's pride—in a different shape,—suggested his refusal of the reluctant courtesies of the premier Baron of England. We are all blockheads of the same drove under various disguises."

"Ha! Launceston!"—cried the Duke of Draxfield, accosting them. "After all your ill-nature, you see I have made good my entrance."

"What bribe did you offer the Princess for your ticket?—a *cornet* of Verdun comfits,—or

that which her *gourmandise* loves still better,—the first edition of a new scandal?"—His lordship paused suddenly;—struck by the painful recollection that the mysterious money transaction between Lord Calder, his sister, and her footman, had been the last on-dit of the fashionable world; and by the disagreeable apprehension that his own conduct might possibly furnish the next theme for club oratory.—But the Duke was neither a very discerning nor a very argumentative observer.

"I effected my grandes entrées," said he, through the family foible of my aunt Wroxworth. She assured me indeed that Waddlestone had passed an especial bill of exclusion against dandies;—but I addressed her a billet-doux, sealed with a family escutcheon, large enough for the Lord Chancellor's signet, which roused all her dormant wivern-and-gules sympathies."

"And I see by your unvaleted lovelocks that you have laid aside the dandy for the day!—No Gowland,—no Kalydor,—no Eau de Ninon,—no Eau d' Heliotrope,—nothing but unsophis-

ticated spring and lavender-water allowed at the toilet!"

"This fellow has done very wisely in unsealing his sanctuary," said the Duke without noticing his friend's sarcasms. "I conclude, Launceston, you persuaded him to admit us for once behind the scenes, that we might see you had not sold yourself too great a bargain. *Foi de Chevalier!* I never saw any thing more exquisite than this house with all that it contains and all that it inherits. My old grandmother Dunriven, who conceives the arts to be attainable only through the Herald's College, would expire of indignation, or attaint Mr. Waddlestone of high treason, were she to behold the agate chalices and Cellini goblets in yonder cabinet; and as to the pictures—Calder declares there is not a Villa in Rome which could display such a string of gems."

"Probably," said Frederica carelessly, "because they have been expressly selected from those ruined temples."

"But do let us a little into the secret, Laun-

ceston!" persisted the Duke of Draxfield. "By what magical clue did you originally find your way to this labyrinth of wonders, and unveil your goddess?—By Jove, if it were not for your mother-in-law,—the monster who guards the golden fruit,—I would gladly exchange Draxfield Court and all my old-fashioned lumber, living and dead,—ay! even the Duchess of Dunriven and Zinganee's two colts,—for your soap-boilery!"

"If you say another word on the subject," said Lord Launceston, his natural levity breaking through his temporary depression, "I will buy up all your mortgages, and eject you from Draxfield without mercy; and if you dare to affront my *belle-mère*, take my word for it, Master Shallow, I will never pay you the thousand pounds I owe you."

"As Midas sings, 'I would not take your bond, Sir.' But see, we have the room to ourselves; every one has disappeared through the conservatory. Pray let us for once follow the multitude; for there is a beautiful little theatre

opening towards the lawn, and I espied Mori, Spagnoletti, Wilman, and Dragonètti, in the orchestra, who told me that Pasta, Malibran, and Donzelli are engaged."

"An opera?" inquired Frederica. "I hope it is something new. In July we are apt to grow tired of Mozart and Rossini."

"An opera! nothing so common-place, believe me. In the first place, the *élite* of the Italian, French, and English companies are to give alternate historical tableaux,—the Kembles have undertaken Henry VIII.;—Charles V. at the court of Francis will follow—Madame Albert taking the part of the Duchesse de Valentinois;—and lastly, we are to have Œdipus represented by the queenly Giuditta!—Lawrence, who was present at the rehearsal, declares it is the best thing of the kind that has ever been attempted in this country."

"And intended, I have little doubt, as a satire on that treble-refined blunder at Calder House," said Lord Launceston.

"Amateur performances are always bad,"

said the duke, leading the way through the conservatory; "and yet they amuse one. There is a certain degree of sympathy and private sentiment mingled with their deficiencies. But what a pity that the Dynleys and Erskynes should not be here to profit by the contrast! Your father-in-law, Launceston! prohibited little Erskyne—probably as being a dangerous companion for his daughter;—and Dynley, I suspect, as being what we all find him—an impertinent jackanapes."

"Nevertheless I wish he were here!" said Frederica, who cherished a particular dislike to Lady Barbara's husband, as the malignant author of half the tales circulated in town, and as the peculiar instigator of her husband's jealous fancies. "I should like to see his frightful face jaundiced o'er by the dread cast of envy. A sort of bilious venom seems to circulate in Mr. Dynley's veins instead of the genial current of the soul."

They were now within the folding doors of a beautiful little theatre of Palladian architecture; its space of audience being enveloped in dim

twilight,—while a strong light was thrown upon the stage from skylights above, at the will and judgment of the performers. The effect thus produced on the grouping of the tableaux was far superior to that of any artificial illumination; and Lady Rawleigh, on seating herself near the entrance, was too much struck by the admirable personification of Harlow's picture of Wolsey and Katharine, by the Kemble family, which was just then in the act of representation, to utter a syllable in expression of her surprise.—It was not till the gradual descent of the curtain closed the scene, that a general murmur of admiration rose from the audience!—

Amid the plaudits of the spectators, and the rhapsodies breathed into her ears by the Duke of Draxfield, Frederica cast her eyes round the theatre, and detected through its misty shades all the most distinguished members of the great world, and all in raptures. Had their entertainment been provided in royal halls, instead of those of a notorious soapboiler, they could not have been more unreservedly gratified.—But the spectacle most surprising to Frederica

of any visible after the fall of the olive velvet curtain, was that of Lord Calder quietly seated between her husband and Lady Sophia Lee, who had left the saloon together some minutes before Launceston and herself;—engaged in tranquil and friendly conversation, and apparently without any solicitude concerning herself or her movements. Calder, whose glass was occasionally bent round the theatre, at length descried her, and bowed with his usual courtesy; but immediately resumed his discourse with Rawleigh, and interrupted it only when his criticisms were claimed by Lord Wroxworth, who was seated before him. In the pauses which subsequently occurred between the tableaux, filled up by some exquisite symphonies which would have suspended the breath of an audience at the Philharmonic, but which being heard elsewhere were received with a buzz of general conversation, the gentlemen of the party changed their places;—wandered from bench to bench—from group to group—that they might bestow on a succession of their fair friends the thrice echoed echoes of

their superlative applause on all they had been seeing and hearing; but Lord Calder remained a fixed star, engrossed by the charms of Sir Brooke Rawleigh's conversation, and enjoying with a plausible air of edification the rational dialogue of Lady Sophia. In his endurance of the heaviest solidity of prose kneaded together by the honourable member for Martwich, he neither "shifted his trumpet, nor only took snuff;"—but encountered common-place with common-place;—answered the most jejune observations by comments equally trite;—and calmly descended to the level of a sluggish monotony of mind. Yet so well accustomed was his lordship to the social art of simulation, that few persons would have conceived him to be otherwise than honestly absorbed by the interesting eloquence of his companions.

Lord Launceston, however, no sooner turned his eyes towards the scene, than he detected its histrionic nature.—But he was now warmly disposed in Lord Calder's favour; and instead of conjecturing that his efforts were directed towards the propitiation of Lady Rawleigh's hus-

band and friend, in order to prolong and secure his access to her society, he candidly gave credit to his new friend for a solicitude to remove in the eyes of the world all stigma from the reputation of an innocent woman, by exhibiting himself in contradiction to every malicious report, as the familiar associate of her legitimate guardian. Lord Launceston secretly thanked him for his amiable motives, and judicious proceedings; and was charmed to observe that during the hour devoted to a succession of tableaux,—some embodying a well-known picture,—others in the German fashion, representing episodes of some romantic ballad, recited in the foreground by a professional minstrel,—the prudent Calder never deserted his post. The Prince de Guéménée, Lord Putney, Colonel Rhyse, Lord George, and several other men distinguished in the ranks of fashion, crowded to Frederica's side, and vied in their homage to attract her attention;—but Lord Calder approached not!

The tableaux were concluded by Rubens's magnificent "Marriage Ceremony of Henri IV.," represented by the whole corps dramatique; and

immediately afterwards the guests, wearied by the over-excitement of so novel a scene,—which while it enchanted their senses by its varied perfection, excited, like the Faëry masque, no jealousies of private rivalship,—gradually dispersed themselves among the shrubberies and berceaux. It was in every sense the Feast of Roses!—for nature revelled in her sunniest hour of vernal maturity, till the gardens were literally showered with blossoms; and yet the deep shade of the trellices and groves, and espaliers of blooming orange trees, secured them from all excess of sunshine.

Lady Rochester was so deeply engrossed in the eagerness of her new conquest,—a Hungarian prince fresh from the wilds of Transylvania, with a countenance of Turkish ferocity enhanced by a revenue and feofs of imperial magnificence,—that Mr. Vaux, her habitual cavalier, found himself at leisure to devote his assiduities to the noble proprietor of Calder House, Calder Park, Calder Chase, and Calder Castle; a patron whom —even in the utmost indolence of his egotism— he never allowed himself to neglect; and tendering the link of his obsequious arm, they

wandered together into a plantation of larches, whose med'cinable gums sent forth volumes of spicy fragrance into the sickly atmosphere of the Garden of Roses.

"All this is admirable!" cried Lord Calder, stopping short as they approached a copy of Bernini's Atalanta, placed in beautiful relief among the darkest recesses of the grove. "It almost puts one out of conceit with the arts to find them not only fostered, but fostered with feeling and judgment by—*a soapboiler!* After all—the schoolmaster has brought society to its level, and the distinctions of birth are losing something of their charm. I shall get my young goose of the capitol, Lord George, to satirize Calder Castle after the fashion of Pope and Timon's villa; and predict that

> Another age shall see its ivied towers
> Mocked by some Bond-street hatter's statued bowers;
> While plaster porticoes around it stand,
> And Nash and Repton lord it o'er the land."

"Bravo — bravissimo!" exclaimed Vaux. "Whatever else the democracy may appropriate, they leave the Damascus blade of satire for the

armouries of true chivalry:—you and Byron are the only fellows for an epigram."

"And yet, in this instance, ridicule is not the faithful test of truth. So far from being able to determine

> What wants this knave
> That a lord should have,

I can positively suggest nothing more luxurious for my own dainty fastidiousness than the existence he has created. On my soul, Vaux, were I like yourself a marrying man"—

"*I*, a marrying man? You wrong me."

"I would have forestalled that hand-over-head blockhead, young Launceston, and appropriated to myself and my heirs these groves and their Dryad.—'Tis the prettiest little creature,—fair and silken as the blossom of some delicate exotic!"

"But you forget that *I* have no gilt bauble with four balls to tender on a crimson cushion in exchange for all her treasures?"

"You have tact and knowledge of the world, which might match any day against the bull-headed candour of a boy like Launceston.

Twenty years hence, he may perhaps become worth speaking to; but at present admire his folly in allowing his good-looking friend Rhyse to act as Strephon to his sylvan divinity!—I saw them just now whispering together in the marble temple among the tulip-trees, while he is mounting guard like some conjugal squire over my fair Frederica!"

"And yonder goes your fair Frederica, lending a gracious ear to the flatteries of mine host of the cauldron. I wonder you trust a personage so attractive in her vicinity."

"Partly to gratify little Erskyne's malicious jealousy, who, I am sorry to say, is exceedingly disposed to become her ladyship's rival in my adoration, and partly to further my own projects, I have adopted it as a duty to send her to Coventry for a whole week. Besides, though I condescended to be jealous of a Lord Vardington, I have no apprehensions from a *père de famille* like our Birmingham friend."

"Rochester is a *père de famille!*"

"But not of the 'moral middle order!'—Never was I more amazed than by finding in my

Hampton incognito, the husband of that woman who annihilated all the fine ladies at the drawing-room ;—I should have imagined the masculine moiety of the awful Androgynes to be a pig-headed pig-tailed old fellow like my Yorkshire steward. Aha! a gong!—let the *chef* be as good as the stage-manager, and the summons need not be repeated."

## CHAPTER XI.

Let us try whether these fatal dissensions may not yet be reconciled; or if that be impracticable, let us guard at least against the worst effects of division, and endeavour to persuade these furious partizans, if they will not consent to draw together, to be separately useful to that cause to which they all pretend to be attached.

JUNIUS.

LADY RAWLEIGH'S *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Waddlestone, nothwithstanding her partiality for his society, and her admiration of the gentleness of his address and enlightened refinement of his mind, had been far from dangerously agreeable. While standing with her brother and the Prince de Guéménée in contemplation of a fountain, formed by a basket of interlaced *jets d'eau*, apparently supported on the celebrated Ibis pedestal from Adrian's villa, she had been ap-

proached by her host with a courteous expression of envy of a far more beautiful fountain—a certain water-lily,—with which he had been enchanted at his statuary's the previous day.

"It was on the point of being packed for Rawleighford Park," observed Mr. W. "Had the treasure been destined for any other spot, I should have been tempted to offer a bribe of a hundred guineas in addition to that I saw inscribed on the accompanying bill, in order to make it my own without delay."

This reference to, or rather this aggravation of, her financial difficulties, sufficed to gather a cloud on Lady Rawleigh's brow;—but whence arose that which now overspread the countenance of her brother?—Was it that Mr. Waddlestone's presence oppressed him with a consciousness of his own unworthy position in the family?—Was it that he feared the scrutinizing eye of a parent might penetrate the treacherous secret lurking in his bosom?—His air and speech became flurried when he attempted to enter into conversation with his future father-in-law; and he immediately endeavoured to in-

troduce a topic, such as might afford a plea for escape.—"Mrs. Waddlestone—he had not yet seen Mrs. Waddlestone. Was she in the gallery?—the saloon?—the Claude breakfast-room?—was there any chance of finding her, if Lady Rawleigh and himself should go in search of her?"

Mr. Waddlestone, evidently surprised by his embarrassment, but with paternal partiality attributing his young friend's discomposure to the unwelcome necessity of bestowing those attentions on his sister which he was eager to offer to his beloved Leonora, replied with a smile, "My wife is scarcely obliged to you for the tardiness of your inquiries; you ought to have known two hours ago that she is confined to the sofa in her Turkish tent-room by a sprained ancle. Nay! do not look so disturbed!—She will be good enough to give you credit for a proper sympathy on so grave an occasion; and, as I know her to be perfectly contented in our kind friend Lady Wroxworth's company, who devotes herself to her for the morning, *I* will pardon you, if instead of

flying to make your inquiries, you find your way to Leonora. She is engaged with Prince Albert and Colonel Rhyse in the music-room. Lady Rawleigh will perhaps honour me by accepting my escort during your absence."

Half the hint would have been sufficient for Lord Launceston. Delighted to escape on any terms, he resigned his sister to Mr. Waddlestone's arm, and hurried away, the prince leisurely following.

"You must forgive me," resumed Mr. W., as soon as they were out of sight, "for venturing to offer my unworthy self as Lord Launceston's representative; but I am not yet so old as to have forgotten the tediousness of a day passed within sight of those we love without the power of communication. My poor girl has been looking so harassed and unhappy all the morning, that I could not but take pity on her."

"Miss Waddlestone is very good—*too* good—in affixing so much importance to my brother's absence or presence," said Frederica, sincerely indignant at Launceston's disingenuous proceedings; "for her own are very eagerly marked,

and warmly prized by many persons equally deserving her attention."

"Pardon me," said Mr. W., unable to understand this seemingly unhandsome allusion on the part of one whom he had been taught to believe as affectionate a sister, as she was amiable and ingratiating in herself; "I cannot allow you to include Lord Launceston in so generalizing a clause. Among all the young men of the day,—whether distinguished by their rank, fortune, fashion, or accomplishments,—I know of none worthy to compare with him in noble candour of disposition—in honourable purity of character."

Lady Rawleigh blushed deeply as she listened to this ill-timed eulogy; and secretly determined to insist, on occasion of her first private interview with her brother, that Mr. Waddlestone and his daughter should be no longer duped by his false pretences.

"Perhaps you may consider me premature," continued her companion, "in referring to an engagement which I trust will, at no distant time, privilege me to address you with more

intimate confidence. But you must forgive a father wrapped up in the welfare and happiness of an only daughter"—(his voice grew husky as he spoke)—"for saying that were Lord Launceston's indiscretions and pecuniary involvements twice as heavy, twice as notorious, as I find them to be—they would be amply compensated by the worthiness of his own disposition, and by the excellence of the mother and sister he will bestow upon my girl. His equals —his *superiors* in rank, Lady Rawleigh, have sought her at my hands; and even among those least qualified to appreciate her merits, Leonora's beauty and dowry have secured, and might still secure, many an illustrious aspirant to her hand; but there is not one—*not one*—besides himself, to whom I could intrust without anxiety the fosterhood of a temper so gentle, the guardianship of a spirit so spotless!"

Mr. Waddlestone was too much affected to notice the consternation of poor Frederica; who heard in these outpourings of parental tenderness renewed accusations against her thoughtless brother. Very sincerely did she

wish that Miss Elbany had never been tempted to quit the "pleasant little village of Wansfield" in search of a genteel independence; but although she did not venture to utter a syllable, Mr. W. fancied he could read in her silence an amiable sympathy with his feelings.

"I have no longer any apprehension," said he, "that the attachment will prove on either side a mere momentary predilection. It is now nearly a year since Horace Rhyse first brought his friend to dine at our Marino; and, with the exception of a few winter months passed by your brother at Rawleighford, and by Leonora at Brighton, they have scarcely been separated a day. Even then, the daily visits of Colonel Rhyse, who was in close correspondence with his friend Launceston, sufficed to turn poor Leonora's cheeks to crimson whenever he was announced. In fact, I am now so satisfied of the steadiness and strength of their mutual affection, that I have come to a determination—"

"My dear Mr. Waddlestone!—my dearest Fred.!" wheezed a panting voice behind,—

"take pity on my exhausted lungs. I have been puffing after you all down the *allée verte;* but you were so deeply engaged that I could not attract your attention. Oh! my dear Frederica!" continued Lady Olivia Tadcaster, coming up with them, and unceremoniously seizing the gentleman's disengaged arm; "*such* a vexatious morning as I have had!—every thing contrary,—every thing perplexing!—You know, my dear, I told you I had promised to lend my carriage and horses to the Peewits, to go first to the oculist's, and afterwards to Calder House, when they were to send it back for me while they were viewing the gallery; and having brought me here, it was to take them to dinner in Charles-street:—then return to fetch me;—then call to bring them home. Nothing could have been better arranged!"

"Severe duty for your horses," said Mr. Waddlestone, conscious that some comment was expected by this erudite professor of the art of ingeniously tormenting.

"Oh!—they are only jobs!—no one has any scruple about working job horses. Well,

my dear Fred., I was full dressed by two o'clock,—(you know I hate to be behind hand) —and from half-past, I began to be on the look out for the carriage;—but all in vain!—First I had the mortification to see Lord Calder's four bays go sweeping by with Lady Rochester; and the Duchess of Whitehaven passed my door before half-past three, evidently on her way to Kensington Gore,—but no signs of my poor unfortunate chariot!—I was quite in despair; I knew the *tableaux* were to begin at four,—and I have not been gratified by seeing any thing of the kind since I was staying, eight years ago, at Nymphenburg, with my old friend the present Queen Dowager of Bavaria. I really could not make up my mind to submit patiently to the deprivation; so I sent a little civil note to Lady Twadell, begging the favour of her equipage, (I called it *equipage* to gratify her silly vulgar pride) to convey me to the fête. But the poor soul has been so mortified by finding herself excluded, that she had the assurance to write me word her coachman was dying of a quinsy; although she is well aware

that I meet her every day in both the parks, and on all the roads round London, with postillions!—I have no notion of such airs!—I consider Lady Twadell a very ungrateful little woman;—it is astonishing what pains it cost me to get her into a little good society, when I was trying to secure her jointure for my nephew."

"And how did you manage to get here at last?" said Lady Rawleigh, trembling lest her aunt's shabby manœuvres should be still further unveiled to Mr. Waddlestone.

"My dear, I sent to half a dozen people;—but every one of them was off!—The reputation of our good friend's excellent table had induced all the latest of the late to set out full an hour earlier than is usual on such occasions. And then, not exactly knowing the *carte du pays*, I made two or three such unlucky blunders!—I wrote to Lady Barbara Dynley for a seat in her phaeton; and she, taking it for a premeditated affront,—(for it seems every one knows that she was refused a card)!—sent me a verbal answer that she was not going to Waddlestone

House, being engaged to dine at Mother Red Cap's with the Chandler's Company;—then I had a very ungracious answer from Lady Margaret Fieldham about her mother's barouche;—and when I stepped over to inquire whether your little friend, Mrs. William Erskyne, could accommodate me, she had the impertinence to reply that *she* never—but I really beg your pardon, Mr. Waddlestone," said Lady Olivia, suddenly checking herself as she became conscious of his presence,—"I beg your pardon for repeating these insolent flippancies: the annoyance of having lost your *tableaux* makes me forget every thing."

"And the Miss Peewits?" inquired Frederica, to fill up this awkward pause in the conversation. "Had any accident occurred,—or were they only negligent?"

"My dear Frederica, I was in a perfect state of agony!—I sent John to Mr. Alexander's,—they had been there to consult him and were gone;—I despatched a second servant to Calder House,—neither they nor the carriage had ever made their appearance!—I could no

longer entertain a doubt that they must have been detained by some very serious mischance; --perhaps the horses had run away,—perhaps the carriage had broke down,—for it has never been to the coachmaker's since I returned from Carlsbad; or perhaps Clara Peewit had fallen into a fit!—for, between ourselves, she has already had two attacks, as much resembling palsy as any thing you ever heard of, and is as likely to go off at a moment's warning as any one I know. I was really beside myself;—for I now gave up the collation for lost, and was actually beginning to fear I should be obliged to put up with a family dinner with my sister Launceston,—one of her insipid sweetbread-and-spring-chicken set outs, instead of my friend's luxurious fare,—when luckily I spied Camomile's carriage stopping at old Lord Cygnet's!—So away I sent my own maid with my compliments and half-a-crown to the coachman, and 'Lady Launceston's sister would be glad to be driven as far as Grosvenor-place, while he was waiting for his master.' I thought, perhaps, I might manage to pick up, or be picked up by

somebody on my way; but, as ill-luck would have it, I was obliged to bring the poor man as far as this very door. However, as the coachmen well knows, my sister is one of Camomile's best patients,—a hundred and fifty pounds per annum without attendance,—and no end to presents in venison, fruit, and coral necklaces, to the little Camomiles! So I really had no scruple in compelling the poor man to *walk* home for once in a way, for it was too late you know for him to visit any other patients. Besides, Lord Cygnet's is one of what I call Camomile's sessions-houses; for he is not only obliged to relieve his lordship's asthmatic hypochondriacism by fetching and carrying all the tittle-tattle of the day for his edification; but to give up an extra half-hour afterwards to the audience of his patient's tiresome twaddle!"

Twaddle!—Lady Olivia Tadcaster utter a syllable in disparagement of twaddle, after inflicting this extensive dose upon two inoffensive individuals, while some twenty of the London colloquial birds of Paradise were fluttering in sight, with their heavenly gamut at the free

disposal of their host and his lovely friend !— Yet let it not be imagined that her sudden pause was occasioned either by want of matter, or want of breath, or by Mr. Waddlestone's impatient interference. At the sound of the appetizing gong, anxiety transferred the wings from her tongue to her feet. Eagerly did she urge her companions to hasten, lest the soups should lose their first 'genial perfection of caloric;—and with the delights of a *potage à la Soubise* before her eyes, lips, and olfactory presentiments, — her ladyship fled like the wicked, though no man pursued.

Discomposed in the first instance by the peculiar nature of Mr. Waddlestone's confidential manifesto, and in the sequel by Lady Olivia's provoking self-exposure, Frederica followed languidly the guidance of her kind and frank-hearted companion. She ventured a few words, indeed, in extenuation of her aunt's apparent selfishness, but Mr. Waddlestone stopped her in a moment.

"Do not apologize to *me*," said he, "for the absurdities of Lady Olivia Tadcaster. She is

an old and tried friend of mine, and has long ranked in my mind among those persons who do themselves less than justice; who are capable of praiseworthy and generous actions, while their conversation announces them as mere egotists."

But this good-natured interpretation did not remove the weight from Lady Rawleigh's spirits; and when she found herself seated in the almost regal banquetting-room at the left hand of her host, who was compelled to place the Duchess of Whitehaven to his right,—and beheld at the end of a glittering vista of gilt-plate her brother occupying the post of honour, and dividing his homage between Mrs. Waddlestone and her daughter, she felt heartily ashamed of his position and her own;—she conceived that they were sharing the guilt of a scandalous and perfidious imposition on a respectable family. Half-way between the two sat Lord Calder, still attached to Lady Sophia and Sir Brooke; and not all the delicacies successively placed before them, not all the more than epicurean daintiness of the

feast, and the brilliant flow of conversation by which it was enhanced, could for a moment efface from Lady Rawleigh's mind the remembrance of her recent, and present, and approaching penance.

Nor did the diversions which succeeded the pleasures of the table afford a more effective charm.—Vain were the concert,—the improvisation,—the charade; and joyfully seizing the pretext of Lady Sophia Lee's avowed engagement to return to town and pass the evening with a friend, Lady Rawleigh's carriage was announced among the earliest departures. —On their way to May Fair, Lady Sophia was fluent in expressions of amazement at the elegance and magnificence displayed in all the arrangements of the day, and more particularly in praise of Leonora and her loveliness; a theme on which Lady Olivia—who had manœuvred herself into the fourth seat in the carriage left vacant by Launceston's delay—fully seconded her eloquence; while poor Rawleigh could talk of nothing but the ingratiating manners of Lord Calder.

"I always fancied him a fine gentleman,—I have heard so many people complain that he was *high*;—and positively I never met with a more simple, unpretending, manly fellow!"

On arriving in Piccadilly the deluded baronet begged he might be set down, in order to find his way to his club; while Lady R.,—after depositing her two companions and learning at the door in Charles-street, whither Lady Olivia desired to be driven, that the Miss Peewits were safely anchored in its harbour to the utter interruption of her projected explanation with her mother,—proceeded—*home!*

"SWEET HOME!"—sang Miss M. Tree in the sweetest days of her nightingalism;—"Sweet home!" echoes the falsetto of many a mocking bird of private life.—"Sweet home!" whistles the school-boy:—"Sweet Home!" murmurs the exile.—Alas!—alas!—

*No* pledge is sacred, and *no* home is sweet

to those who endure the stings of indigence and the pangs of conscience.—(This should have been *vice versa*—but *n'importe!*)

It was just ten o'clock when Frederica en-

tered her cheerless drawing-room, — cheerless from being prematurely closed for the evening, and filled with fading flowers and a general disarray which accused the abstraction of its mistress's mind; and having desired Martin to extinguish the candles, she fled from its dreariness to her own room, resolved to take shelter from herself in a long night's rest. But no sooner did she reach her dressing-table than, true as Mephistopheles to her victim, Mrs. Pasley appeared with a very peculiar expression of impertinence irradiating her large pepper-and-salt coloured eyes.

"I am not well—or am over fatigued;—I think I shall go to bed," said Lady Rawleigh, unclasping one of her bracelets and throwing it on the table.

"Indeed, my lady, I must say you appear extremely indisposed," observed the lady's-maid; "quite *frappé en haut*, as my Lord Launceston's Swiss valet expresses it. Perhaps your ladyship is not well enough to look at these letters?"

And she produced on a salver a horrible-looking fac-simile of the missive of Messieurs Stub-

ble and Bubble; which, although emanating from a more humanized district than Clerkenwell, emulated all its partnership dignity of address. But instead of adding to their thanks for past favours a solicitation for new ones, the Bond-street haberdashers subjoined to the expression of their gratitude a "small account, which being the close of the season, or Midsummer half-year they conceived it might be agreeable to her ladyship to look over and settle previously to leaving town." Her ladyship, as the first process of this *agreeable* duty, cast her eyes from the long sinuous curly-tailed £., marshalling the first column of the enemy, to the awful base; "units,—tens," but no!—we have no inclination to unveil the secrets of the sex! —Suffice it that in defiance of Pasley's scrutinizing presence, Frederica sank breathless into her chair!

"Another note, my lady!—Mrs. William Erskyne's own maid brought it this evening, and was extremely anxious to wait for an answer till your ladyship came home; but the housekeeper would not hear of it.—Reelly, ma'am,

Mrs. Erskyne is so very oddly spoken of, that we are by no means anxious to entangle ourselves with the acquaintance of any of her establishment." And Frederica, on receiving the billet into her trembling hands, found a ready explanation of her lady-in-waiting's familiar impertinence, on observing that it had been purposely left unsealed that its insulting contents might be exposed to the curiosity of her domestics. Involuntarily she covered her cold forehead with her hands, and faltered her commands to Mrs. Pasley that a hackney-coach should be immediately procured.

"A—a—hackney-coach!—for—for your ladyship—at—at this time of night?" cried the lady's-maid, apprehending some dreadful issue.

"Desire John to call a coach, and put on your bonnet to accompany me;" said Lady Rawleigh, attempting to resume her air of authority.

"La! my lady!—*Me*,—my lady?—Why it is near eleven o'clock!—The servants in the hall will think it so very extr'ornary!"

"I desire I may hear nothing further of their thoughts or your's; but get ready to accompany me to Curzon-street."

Mrs. Pasley flounced out of the room, in reluctant obedience to commands uttered with a degree of asperity so unusual to the lips of her gentle mistress; and somewhat disappointed that no catastrophe more awful than an evening visit to Lady Sophia Lee was about to tax her powers of professional secrecy.

Not a syllable was exchanged between the two while the vehicle, whose unsavory and uneasy properties did not so much as excite the notice of Lady Rawleigh, jolted towards its destination; but on approaching the mansion of General Lee, her ladyship requested that no knock might disturb the inmates, and that John's mysterious ring at the bell might be accompanied by a request in her name to see Lady Sophia alone. Having been respectfully ushered by the gray-headed butler to a boudoir, separated by a sort of museum-corridor from the drawing-room, Frederica was not long kept in suspense.

"What *is* the matter?—You look pale,—agitated:—sit down, my dearest Lady Rawleigh, and compose yourself!" said her friend, affectionately embracing her after having carefully closed the door.

"Forgive me for disturbing you," said the culprit in a low voice; "but I am come to ask your advice."

"Rawleigh has been tormenting you!" ejaculated Lady Sophia, who had no especial predilection for her Warwickshire kinsman.

"No,—I have only been tormenting myself."

"You have heard, then, of these foolish reports about little Erskyne; but in what way do they involve you?—You did not introduce her to Lord Calder, nor are you responsible for her bad education and want of principle."

"I am wholly ignorant to what you allude:—but my grievances are all personal,—my follies all my own."

"My dear Frederica!"—

"I am overwhelmed with debts, difficulties, and disgrace; and I want your counsel whether

to throw myself on Rawleigh's forgiveness, as my heart inclines me,—or expose my weakness only to mamma and Launceston."

"You must tell me something more than this vague self-accusation, before I can decide."—

"Most unfortunately," resumed Lady Rawleigh, with a sigh of mingled heaviness and contrition, "a very liberal settlement of pin money was made on me at my marriage. I was brought up in total ignorance of the comparative value of money; had never been admitted to the slightest discussion of pecuniary affairs; and this unlucky four hundred a-year appeared to my inexperience to comprehend all the riches of the earth. More than half this infinite treasure, however, was appropriated to the disgraceful écarté business with which you are already acquainted; while the remainder has been trifled away by my own idle improvidence, and in some degree through the undue influence of others.—But no matter!—I am now so deeply involved, that nothing less than four or five hundred pounds can restore me to my

peace of mind. Tell me, dear Lady Sophia,—dare I sufficiently rely on Rawleigh's indulgence to acknowledge the whole truth, and claim his pardon and assistance?"

"*How* much did you say?" inquired Lady Sophia, musingly; while Lady Rawleigh construing her calmness into an expression of amazement and disgust, stammered forth,

"About five hundred pounds!"

"Are you sure that sum would cover the whole?" inquired her friend; while Frederica, anticipating the degradation of an offered loan, eagerly exclaimed, "You do not surely suppose that I would accept such an obligation from any but my own family?—I trust—I hope—you believe me incapable of having calculated on your assistance. I thought you had a better opinion of me."

To Lady Rawleigh's surprise and indignation—for her own heart was full—her companion's reply to this heroic appeal was a violent burst of laughter; which was only renewed and repeated, when she rose with great dignity, and prepared to take her depar-

ture. She could not endure the spectacle of her friend's unsympathizing mirth. But Lady Sophia, instead of apologizing for her rudeness, seized her visitor forcibly by the hand, and drew her towards the drawing-room.

"No—no! I cannot see General Lee to-night—I am too weary—too miserable!" exclaimed the struggling Frederica.

"General Lee is dining at Twickenham!" replied Lady Sophia, still approaching the drawing-room. "But I have a friend here who will feel very little hesitation in accommodating you with such a trifle as five hundred pounds!" And throwing open the drawing-room door with an exclamation of—"Here! my dear!—I have brought you a penitent spendthrift!"—her indignant guest suddenly found herself in the presence of the despised Miss Elbany!—

"My dear Frederica!" cried the presumptuous companion, advancing with the most offensive familiarity to take her hand.

"This is too much!" exclaimed Lady Rawleigh, turning indignantly aside; while Lady

Sophia threw herself into a chair with a renewal of her provoking merriment, and Miss Elbany encircled the recoiling waist of her victim with a tender embrace.

"My dearest Frederica! have you not a single kind word to say to your cousin Mary?" whispered the rejected damsel.

"Mary Trevelyan?" faltered Lady Rawleigh with sudden consciousness.

"Mary Trevelyan!—to whom you have demeaned yourself so harshly, while you were solely occupied with her eulogy and defence!—My dear, dear Fred.!—shall I ever forget the zeal with which you fought my battles against Broughley and Mrs. Woodington and all my tribe of enemies,—while *I* sat by, an unsuspected spectator of the affray!"

Lady Rawleigh actually trembled with delight!—She saw through it all!—Sir Brooke was innocent—was an accomplice of the stratagem,—she alone had been unreasonable, unjust, jealous, absurd; but she received and returned the affectionate embrace of her beautiful cousin,—and all was forgotten!

"Dismiss your hackney-coach, and come and chat comfortably with us over our tea," said Lady Sophia, removing her bonnet and drawing her towards the sofa. "You can send back a message to Rawleigh by the servants, to come and fetch you on his return from the Alfred."—

And in a few minutes the three fair friends were gossipping away with as much cheerful and confidential unanimity, as if their friendly union had never known interruption; and as if they were not preordained to

> Meet again
> In thunder, lightning, and

all the painful perplexity of a domestic storm.

## CHAPTER XII.

But what is your affair in Elsineur?

HAMLET.

"Do you remember, my dear Frederica," inquired Lady Mary Trevelyan, after some twenty reminiscences of a similar nature, "how I affronted you by purposely criticising your court-dress, in order to send you to the drawing-room with the brilliant bloom of suppressed indignation?"

"And do you recollect, my dear cousin," cried Lady Rawleigh in her turn, "how mortified I was on learning that my mother intended her new companion's portrait to be the *pendant* of mine and Launceston's!"

"And poor dear Sir Brooke!—whom I used

to comfort in all his domestic tribulations, at the peril of being stilettoed by his jealous little wife."

"It was hardly fair of you," cried Frederica, blushing, "to steal this march on us, and pry into the nakedness of the land. Heaven knows what secrets you might have detected,—or what family plots unravelled!"

"You gave me strange encouragement to proceed in mine, by all the handsome encomiums you bestowed on the merits of your absent cousin."

"Merits which I had not the grace to discern in Miss Elbany."

"My dear Fred.! all your disapprobation was most appropriately bestowed. You saw me in a false position. Had I been in fact as well as seeming, the hired companion of my aunt Launceston, I should have been the worst and most presumptuous of my species. But I see you are dying to interrogate me touching the motives of my 'excellent dissembling;' and I am fully prepared to gratify you, provided

you first appease my curiosity by explaining the cause of your present visit?"

"Do you then venture to doubt my word?" said Lady Sophia Lee, holding up her hand in a menacing attitude. "'Tis even as I told you!—The poor child has spent all its money; and you cannot do better than secure it from the whipping it deserves, by presenting it the thousand pound cheque with which Lord Trevelyan has commissioned you to procure 'the cadeau for his dear niece and god-daughter Frederica, which he neglected to send on the occasion of her marriage.' My life on it, she will prefer the payment of her debts, to all the pearl necklaces and sapphire Sévignes in Kitching's shop!"

"Here is my father's letter, with its enclosure," said Lady Mary, taking a paper from her portfolio, and tendering it to Lady Rawleigh. "Read it at your leisure, my dear cousin, that you may assure yourself I have neither exceeded my commission nor imposed on your delicacy!—And now for my own manifesto; the most painful article of which is spared me in the confes-

sion, inasmuch as my treacherous friend Sophia acknowledges having already informed you of my indefensible fidelity to my cousin William, and my determination to ally myself with no other human being."

"As well as of Lord Trevelyan's anxiety to shake your resolution."

"I may as well still further spare your blushes, my dear Mary, and acquaint your cousin that after being wooed by half the resident princes of Italy and wandering peers of England,—and after driving some into the Po, and some into the Tiber by your obduracy,—you so far ceded to your father's intreaties as to promise that if, on visiting England and forming an acquaintance under a feigned name and assumed character with your recreant knight, you found him inferior in merit to your preconceived prejudice in his favour, you would return and accept the hand of whichever among your adorers he might be pleased to select for your husband."

"I had very little apprehension of incurring so dreadful an alternative," said Lady Mary

Trevelyan, her fine countenance brightened by emotion; "and having secured my father's concurrence in this wild-goose scheme, I easily obtained my kind aunt Launceston's promise of assistance. In fact she was pining for the loss of her daughter, and was delighted with the prospect of a visit from the child of a beloved brother."

"Mary had not however the wisdom to confide her plans and projects to *me!*" cried Lady Sophia, "or I should have certainly opposed such a dereliction from the dignity of the sex."

"Or to intrust her cousin with the secret," observed Frederica, reproachfully, "or I might have avoided a thousand discourtesies and a world of painful jealousies."

"Your mother would not hear of admitting you into the conspiracy. 'My Frederica,' she said, 'is of so candid a disposition, so unused to dissembling, so warm a partisan in her cousin Mary's cause, and above all so tenderly attached to her brother's interests, that we must not calculate upon *her* prudence on a similar occasion.'"

"But surely you ran great chance of recognition from many of the visiters in Charles-street, who must have seen you in Italy?"

"One or two, I suspect, were puzzled,—and terminated the difficulty by setting me down as a poor relation, or a natural daughter of the Trevelyan family;—but my father has associated very little with the English residents on the continent. It was my inquisitive aunt Olivia who formed my chief embarrassment. She had not however seen me for many years, and I own it afforded me no little amusement in my assumed character to baffle her manœuvres."

"And excite the jealousies of your poor cousin," said Lady R., smiling. "You have made sad victims of us all!"

"While I was solely intent on *one*;—and I flatter myself not without success. William fell into the snare with far more facility than my utmost vanity could have anticipated. From the first evening of our meeting he was at my feet! Before a fortnight had elapsed he even urged me to unite my fate with his by

a clandestine marriage; and had it not been for Lady Launceston's qualifying representations of his fickleness on other occasions, perhaps I might have been tempted to render his probation *too* short by throwing aside the mask at once!—It was the perplexity of not knowing how to get rid of his importunities without a premature discovery, which induced me during your visit at Ash Bank to take Sir Brooke Rawleigh into our counsels."

"How astonished he must have been;—how ashamed of his wife,—how angry with Launceston!"

"He *was* angry with Launceston; and in my opinion far more so than the case required. But Rawleigh candidly acknowledged he had some reason to suppose his brother-in-law entangled with another engagement; and promised to make the necessary investigation while I retired from the scene of action."

"And where did you go on that mysterious occasion?" inquired Frederica, recollecting her brother's pilgrim's progress through all the

parishes of Sussex. "To Rawleighford, I hope."

"I ought to have told you that my father escorted me to England, and has been living in strict privacy at Trevelyan Castle to wait the result of my chimerical plot. From thence on Lady Sophia's arrival, I wrote to beg her hospitality."

"Which, with an abundance of scolding for your folly, I condescended to bestow. She has been with me these three weeks, Frederica; and on Sir Brooke's favourable report concerning the Waddlestone affair,—for he persists in believing that no such engagement exists,—I ventured to indulge Mary's idle curiosity and gratify her vanity by a sight of her rival at the fête at Calder House."

"Do you remember our awkward rencontre in the vestibule?" said Lady Mary. "My consternation was *au comble;* for the Guémenées are very old friends of mine, and I expected every moment to be recognised and addressed by them as 'Ledi Marie Triviglian,' and by Mr. Broughley as Miss Elbany.

What *you* might be pleased to call me, Frederica, I dared not even anticipate;—for believe me you looked much fiercer on the occasion than Una's lion!"

"I own I was very angry,—but more with Sophia than yourself; for alas! I was better apprised than either of the serious nature of my brother's engagements in another quarter."

"No—no!" cried Lady Mary, blushing deeply. "Even had I been previously doubtful of the strength of Launceston's attachment, the easy familiarity of his demeanour towards the queen of the fairies on that occasion would have convinced me that I had nothing to fear from Titania. So far from appearing embarrassed by her presence and mine, he urged me to allow him to present Miss Waddlestone, who had long been desirous of making my acquaintance."

"What audacity!—what scandalous hypocrisy!" exclaimed Frederica with indignation.—"Nothing can justify William's double-dealing in this affair!"

Lady Mary Trevelyan, although evidently

disturbed by the vehemence of her cousin, was too proud to request an explanation of these animadversions; but Lady Sophia's interest in the happiness of her friend forbade a mere point of delicacy to interfere with her clearer insight into the subject. "My dear Frederica," said she, "we know you to be at once the true friend of your brother, and Mary's earnest partizan;—even the violence of your prejudice against Miss Elbany tended to prove the eagerness with which you were disposed to promote the union of Lord Launceston and Lady Mary Trevelyan.—Tell us therefore candidly,—do you differ from Rawleigh in your estimate of his attachments and entanglements;—have you any reason to suppose him seriously engaged to Leonora Waddlestone, and disposed to trifle with the affections of a person in Miss Elbany's apparent situation in life?"

"Not all your arguments—not all your assertions," interrupted Lady Mary with spirit, "will induce me to think so ill of him as such conduct would demand. That Launceston loves me with fervour and sincerity, is too deeply

imprinted in my mind—in my heart—to be easily obliterated. Expert indeed must be the hypocrite who could affect all I have heard and seen him profess to feel. I am no novice in the flatteries and *feigning* of mankind. The same vows have been sworn to me by other lips —the same devotion affected by other men;— my fortune has insured me suitors of various countries, and various degrees of hypocrisy;— but none have ever deceived me into credulity."

"Surely, however," said Lady Sophia, "it may be possible that your partiality for your cousin"—

"If there be faith in any human heart, it is in Launceston's!" cried her friend, with all the eager confidence of affection.

"She will not listen to reason from the lips of any one but his sister," said Lady Sophia, addressing Frederica. "It is therefore incumbent on you to forewarn this infatuated cousin of yours, should you chance to be better instructed in his views. In one word, my dear Frederica, *is* Lord Launceston free in

heart and hand to tender himself to Mary's acceptance?"

Lady Rawleigh shook her head.

"My dearest cousin, explain yourself," said Lady Mary Trevelyan. "Without promising to yield implicit conviction to your *inferences*, I am really anxious to acquaint myself with every *fact* within your knowledge."

"Do not ask it—do not ask it," faltered Frederica. "Launceston is too dear to me, his honour is too precious in my sight, to be lightly compromised. I cannot bear to believe him so unworthy as I fear he has proved himself."

"But the whole affair must necessarily be brought to an immediate explanation," observed Lady Sophia Lee. "Lord Trevelyan is growing impatient,—his health suffers by his sojourn in the damp atmosphere of Cornwall; and having been deceived by his sister's sanguine letters into a belief of Lord Launceston's passion for his daughter, he is about to visit London. After forcing his nephew to confess his attachment to the obscure Miss Elbany,

it will be no small triumph to tender to his acceptance the object of his rash passion,—in the form of Lady Mary Trevelyan, with a fortune of ten thousand a-year!—"

"What—what will my uncle think and say of William, when he learns the truth!—Oh! my dear Mary!—for all our sakes persuade him at least to defer this fatal éclaircissement!"

"You really alarm me!" cried Lady Mary, turning very pale. "And as you perceive that a crisis is inevitable, surely you will not scruple to apprize me of the truth. Are you certain that Launceston has been at any time *really* engaged to Miss Waddlestone?"—

"Alas! it is but a few hours since I was informed of the fact by her father; and with so much emotion of parental tenderness, that I can no longer withhold my belief."

Lady Mary Trevelyan shuddered, but said nothing.

"And this is not the worst!—Were it a mere engagement, formed as the world believes from sordid motives on one side, and ambitious views on the other, I could wish—I could hope

—that it might be mutually resigned. But I can no longer indulge in expectations of such a nature. Leonora's affections are too deeply pledged for Mr. Waddlestone to behold them betrayed without signal retribution; his whole heart is as much set as his daughter's on her union with my brother."

"Do you assure me, dear Frederica," said Lady Mary, scarcely able to articulate, "that Leonora is really attached to him?"

Lady Rawleigh was significantly silent.

"Poor girl!" involuntarily ejaculated Lady Sophia. "To *her* delicate feelings the shock of disappointment will be indeed severe!"

"Frederica! you have not answered me?" said Lady Mary, with solemn earnestness.—"Does Mr. Waddlestone's daughter really love your brother?"

"It was not till that unfortunate fête at Calder House," hesitated Lady Rawleigh, "that I had an opportunity of learning from her own lips how deeply her heart is pledged to Launceston. It was my intention to put her on her guard by some slight hint of his levity and in-

fidelity, till the candour of her allusion to her attachment completely disarmed me. I had no courage to agonize the feelings of so gentle and confiding a being."

"It is enough!" murmured Lady Mary Trevelyan, rising from her seat. "Suffer me to leave you;—I can meet this mortification best alone. Sophy!—do not follow me!—Your consolations, however kindly meant, are unavailing to soften this last—this wholly unexpected misfortune!"

"Have I done wrong in declaring the truth?" said Lady Rawleigh timidly, as soon as her cousin had closed the door of the apartment.

"No!—decidedly not," answered her friend, after a moment's consideration. "The worst part of this calamity has originated in deception,—mutual deception; and depend on it dissimulation is ever productive of equally disastrous results. Truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, is the only guide insuring eventual safety; and Ithuriel's spear, although an obsolete, is a safe weapon to fight our way through the world."

"Launceston's deceptions could not have been prolonged, or I own I should have hesitated to inflict so much pain upon poor Mary."

"Do not alarm yourself!—She has a romantic but a truly courageous spirit. I know no person more capable of generous sacrifices and honourable disinterestedness than Mary Trevelyan."

"And such is the sister I have lost!—such the companion!" cried Frederica, despondingly. "Leonora is a mild, intelligent, endearing creature; but no more to be compared in qualities and endowments with my high-minded cousin, than in dignity of birth and station!"

"It was so ill-done on my part to depend on Rawleigh's judgment in such a case!" cried Lady Sophia, peevishly. "But, in truth, I was guided by your mother's opinion, who has managed the affair throughout with perfect prudence and delicacy. For all the best faculties of a woman's mind and heart borne with the unassuming meekness of a saint, commend me to Lady Launceston!—Were it not for the infirmity of her health, she would be the most

charming companion, as she is at present the most excellent woman in England."

"That is Sir Brooke's knock!" cried Frederica, suddenly starting up, and tying on her bonnet.

"I am glad it is so late, for I should have had no patience to sit in his company without reproaching him with the mischief he has occasioned. At all events, do not involve him further in the affair by acquainting him with Mary's wretchedness; I will see you early tomorrow, and inform you of her future views and resolutions."

It is unnecessary to acquaint the reader with what degree of exactness Lady Rawleigh obeyed the injunctions of her friend. Few are the women whose heroic constancy to the claims of their own sex induce them to withhold its secrets from the conjugal ear; and if Frederica really abstained from introducing Sir Brooke behind the scenes of Cousin Mary's confidence, and reproaching him with the evils arising from his own blindness and credulity in the affair, she deserves considerable praise for her forbear-

ance both as a wife and a friend. But lest she should pass for a miracle of caution, it is but fair to state that her mind was considerably engrossed by the altered position of her own affairs,—by rejoicings over her immediate extrication,—mingled with penitence for past follies, and good resolutions for the future. Her first duty was to indite a formal note to Mrs. William Erskyne, to accompany on the morrow the fatal remittance for the Opera-box; and although her misgivings and terrors respecting the tenor of Mr. Obadiah Ruggs's answer to her request no longer disturbed her repose, she was seated at her desk in her dressing-room the following morning at nearly the same hour which had closed her night of sorrow on the occasion of Lord Calder's fête.

But times were strangely altered with Frederica. The sparrows chirped, and she had not a word to say against their importunate garrulity;—the water-carts rumbled, and they were nothing more obnoxious to her feelings than the rolling wheels of some triumphal chariot;—the milk-pails jingled, and she was

patient—the post knock startled the dull ear of morn, and she cared not for the peal!

"Can it be possible!" she exclaimed, as this last circumstance forced itself on her notice, "that all my vexation, and discontent, and peevishness, and nervous distemperature for the last three weeks, has originated in the want—*the waste*—of money?—Have I, in the wantonness of thoughtless extravagance, contracted so mean a feeling as pecuniary anxiety?—Never—never again will I expose myself to such temptations and such wretchedness;—and when perfect confidence in money transactions is established between myself and Rawleigh—when by referring to him for the immediate payment of my bills, I expose myself to reprehension for any prodigal or frivolous action, I shall be insured from all danger of further extravagance. I love him too well—much too well—to hazard the loss of his good opinion for the indulgence of my idle fancies."

Such was the result of her matin meditations;—while the fruits of her early rising were made apparent as she approached the breakfast

table with a list of her debts in one hand, and in the other the cheque forwarded to her acceptance by Lord Trevelyan.

Does any one wish to see the list of a lady's debts?—does any curious impertinent of the male sex desire to pry into the mysteries of female extravagance?—If so, he may be admitted into the secret on condition that the opinions he ventures to express on such an occasion, are as lenient as those which proceeded from the lips of the honourable member for Martwich.

| | £ | *s.* | *d.* |
|---|---|---|---|
| Opera-box . . | 150 | 0 | 0 |
| Fountain . . . | 94 | 10 | 0 |
| Horse . . . | 80 | 0 | 0 |
| Miniature . . | 31 | 10 | 0 |
| Hampton . . . | 15 | 15 | 0 |
| Haberdasher . . | 79 | 13 | 6½ |
| Mantuamaker . . | 112 | 10 | 6 |
| Jeweller . . . | 43 | 7 | 0 |
| Pasley's account . | 33 | 4 | 0 |
| One year's pocket-money | 75 | 0 | 0 |
| Ecarté . . . | 280 | 0 | 0 |
| | 994 | 9 | 0½ !!! |

Against these items was inscribed a per contra of—

| | £ | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Received of Mamma . | 100 | 0 | 0 |
| Lady Olivia | 50 | 0 | 0 |
| Pin money | 300 | 0 | 0 |
| | 450 | 0 | 0 |

leaving an unpaid balance of 544 9 10½!

"And now that you have perused and re-perused this record of my frailties and follies," whispered Frederica, as she hung over her husband's chair, "deign to accept the sum presented to me by my uncle,—give me only the balance necessary for the payment of my debts,—and for the future let the odious word of PIN MONEY be forgotten between us!"

Sir Brooke smiled, and shook his head,—but not reproachfully.

"I know you will be as conscientious and liberal a banker," continued Frederica, while tears of tenderness and repentance streamed

from her eyes, "as you are a merciful judge; and for the future I shall have no scruple in demanding from your hand the payment of my personal bills, for they shall never be of a nature to excite your disapprobation."

"But as this affair of the Pin Money was legally specified on—"

"No—no—no!" interrupted Lady Rawleigh. "Nothing has been, or ever shall be, legally specified between us!—I have proved myself incapable of the management of my revenue, and am therefore bound to appoint a chancellor of the exchequer. Should I ever become as worldly-wise as my aunt Olivia, be assured I will re-demand my abdicated rights."

"God forbid that you should ever be otherwise than I see you now!" ejaculated Sir Brooke, as he folded her in his arms;—and in the expansion of his feelings forgot to point out an error of calculation in the pounds of her *compte rendu*. "I accept your pledge,—I welcome your promises,—I have perfect faith

in the good intentions of my own dear wife. Should she at any future time repent her confidence in my liberality, she has only to address her formal demand to Obadiah Ruggs; in the meantime," said Sir Brooke, putting Lord Trevelyan's cheque into his pocket, with a determination that it should be scrupulously devoted to its original purpose; "in the meantime let me write you a draft for the balance of your account. If you love me, send it to Lombard-street immediately after breakfast, and discharge your obligations to that mischievous Mrs. Erskyne without further delay. Henceforth, dearest Frederica, be all past grievances forgotten between us!"—

"*Between* us if you will:—but it will be a salutary lesson to me, to cherish for life the recollection of all I have suffered through my ignorance and neglect of the value of money."

"Before Sir Brooke had reached the final "*gh*" in the signature of his cheque, Lord Launceston was announced.

"Leave us together," whispered Frederica to her husband, as he entered the room.—"My brother looks as if he had something important to communicate."

## CHAPTER XIII.

But whatso'er he had of love, reposed
On that beloved daughter!—She had been
The only thing which kept his heart unclosed
Amid the hardening of the worldly scene;
A lonely pure affection unopposed!
There wanted but the loss of this to wean
His feelings from all milk of human kindness.

THERE is nothing more absurdly diverting to an indifferent spectator, than the sight of two persons connected by intimate ties of kindred and affection, casually alienated into a sort of awkward estrangement and formality by the existence of some disagreeable secret;—when a common topic predominates in the minds of both, and neither can venture to approach the prohibited subject.

Lord Launceston's embarrassment sought the usual channel for the splenetic effusions of

a discontented Englishman. He began to complain of the weather; protested that the fête at Kensington Gore had been spoiled by a redundance of sunshine,—the evening rendered disagreeable by an insalubrious dew; — and now stood at the window looking up anxiously towards the clouds on an excuse of coming rain, but in reality to evade his sister's inquisition. While Frederica, who was at once eager to escape his inquiries, and anxious to forward her own, affected an unusual degree of interest in the news of the morning,—the reports concerning Mrs. Erskyne, and a strange rumour she had heard respecting a marriage between Mr. Vaux and Lady Margaret Fieldham.

To these idle *on dits* Lord Launceston lent a willing but a listless ear. His mind was full, —his heart was full;—and, like all persons of real sensibility who attempt an unusual degree of caution and finesse in introducing a disagreeable subject of discussion,—he brought forth the business at last in the most abrupt and inartificial manner. Suddenly interrupting himself in a diatribe against Vaux as the most plausible and worldly-minded of the crawlers

on the globe, he exclaimed, "My dear Frederica,—unless you undertake an explanation of this business to Mr. Waddlestone, I know not what will become of us all."

"Impossible!" cried Lady Rawleigh; "for worlds I would not encounter the expression of that poor girl's wretchedness!"

"Of *you*," continued Lord Launceston, without noticing her reply, "*he* has the very highest opinion. From *your* lips he would listen patiently to an apology which, if delivered by myself or Horace, would certainly produce an insult and a duel in the first instance, and a decided rupture between the lovers in the second!"

"I should have imagined that, with your present views and feelings, you would desire nothing better than such an excuse for getting rid at once of poor Leonora."

"To be sure not!—Nothing but my old friendship for Rhyse has compelled me to wear the mask so long; but now that old Offaley *has* consented, I think it rather hard,—but it is no use talking to *you* on the subject. *Your*

prejudices, my dear Frederica, must necessarily render any circumstances distasteful to you which would immediately determine me to claim the hand of my poor dear Lucy."

"Have you resolved, *en attendant*, to drive me to distraction by all these mysteries?" exclaimed his sister. "What in the world have Lord Offaley and his son to do with your marriage?"

"How!" cried Lord Launceston, coming from his window, and throwing himself on a seat beside her. "Is it possible that you are still deceived?—Leonora assured me that on the night of the Calder House fête she attempted to explain to you the unlucky deception in which we have foolishly involved ourselves."

"Attempted—but really Miss Waddlestone's explanations are as little luminous as your own. If you love me, my dear William, admit a little further light into the business."

"I *do* love you, my little Fred.!—and not the less for the warm interest you bestow on my affairs. In one word, then, or in as few as pos-

sible, know that last summer I received a letter from Horace Rhyse, imploring me to come down to Cowes without delay, and rescue him from a most painful predicament. I thought the poor fellow was in limbo; and in the simplicity of my heart gathered together all the pounds, shillings, and pence, I could call my own, with a view to relieve the difficulties of my oldest Harrow friend; who through life has done me more good turns in a quiet way than I would have accepted from any other man, or can ever pay him back. The prison in which I found him was neither more nor less than Waddlestone's beautiful Marino! He had picked up the family at Rome, and fallen as desperately in love with Leonora, as if there were any chance of prevailing on his stiffnecked father to receive into his family a soapboiler's daughter; or of inducing Mrs. Waddlestone to content herself with being mother to an Honourable Mrs. Rhyse."

"Ah! my dear Launceston—I see it all now;—I sincerely beg your pardon for—"

"No! you don't see it half,—and you had

better not beg my pardon at present. Believe me, I deserve all the saucy things you have said and done in the business, by madly conniving in one of the most absurd schemes that ever was concocted by two wrong-headed lovers! But in fact Colonel Rhyse was induced to seek my aid, by the unpleasant circumstances arising from Mrs. W.'s suspicions of his attachment to her daughter. After inviting him to her house, and throwing them together in the most unjustifiable or stupid manner, she suddenly informed him of her positive determination 'to marry Leo to a lord,' adding some slight hints that there were other bathing places, and other Marinos, where he might enjoy the sea air fully as well as on the banks of the Medina."

"And you came to his assistance,—and by lending him the shelter of your coronet, secured the continuance of her favour?"

"Exactly so!—She was so charmed with 'my lordship' that she would gladly have extended her hospitality to my lordship's valet and poodle, to say nothing of my bosom friend. Under my sanction Rhyse was duly re-admitted to the

yacht and the dinner-table; while Leonora thanked me with her soft blue eyes for this insurance of their mutual happiness."

"They were perhaps already engaged?"

"Heart and soul and hand!—and if we had been wise,—if there had existed one tolerable head-piece among the three,—she would have appealed at once to the affection of her parents, and ended the business without further artifice. But Horace had a difficult part to play in his own family. Lord Offaley being as poor as a parish workhouse, thinks it necessary to maintain his dignity by uniting in his own person all the pride of the peerage; and as he was then in the habit of favouring his son with a letter every post, commanding him to throw himself at the feet of Lady Margaret Fieldham, it seemed useless to answer them by a statement of his attachment to the daughter of a soap-boiler; so, like all dunces, we decided amongst us that it would be better to gain time,—procrastinate the explanation,— and pacify Mrs. Waddlestone—by my assuming the capacity of a suitor to Leonora."

"Oh! Launceston!—how could you lend yourself to such a deception?"

"Ay! indeed—how could I?—It was a most shameful piece of duplicity,—shameful because I profited largely by the imposition;—being cordially received into one of the pleasantest and most hospitable houses in England, while I was deceiving the partiality of the best of fathers!"

"Poor Mr. Waddlestone!"

"Don't talk of him, Frederica, don't talk of him—I dare not even look forward to the moment of meeting him again! I really love that man;—I consider him one of the most high-minded and honourable fellows upon earth; and flatter myself that at present he regards *me* with a personal predilection.—The certainty of forfeiting his good opinion is most painful to my feelings."

"But the explanation is now inevitable," said Frederica, musingly.

"As to his daughter," continued Lord Launceston, pursuing his train of thought—"had she been Lady Leonora or Queen Leonora, she

never would have been more to me than a pretty gentle little girl,—I have no taste for such diminutive goddesses;—I require, even in a woman, even in my wife, more decision of character, and more nobility of aspect."

"Such as you found in Lucy Elbany?" observed Frederica slily.

"But with respect to Waddlestone, were he that same Lucy Elbany's poor curatizing uncle, I should still regard him with the same respectful admiration. He is a gentleman in every sense of the word."

"I doubt whether he will be inclined to return that compliment either to Colonel Rhyse or yourself."

"He would wrong his own judgment if he did;—our conduct has been unpardonable."

"Well!—I must make the best of it for you both," said Lady Rawleigh, rising to ring for the carriage.

"Frederica!—my dearest sister! do you really mean to say that you will undertake this unpleasant office?"

"I do indeed,—provided that—"

"No provisos which have any allusion to Lucy!"

"At least, allow me to"—

"No—no! I will allow you to do nothing but go and put on your bonnet. *I* will order the carriage while you are away."

The bonnet and the harnessing produced no very important delay; and it was agreed between Frederica and her brother that she should drop him at Colonel Rhyse's lodgings in Chapel-street, that they might drive together in his cabriolet along the Knightsbridge road and await any favourable issue; when just as Launceston was conducting his sister down stairs, Lady Olivia's voice was heard in the hall.

"Oh! that woman!" groaned his lordship.

"Oh! my dear Fred.!—my dear nephew!" cried her ladyship.

"Do not allow her to detain us," whispered Lord Launceston to his sister. "Do not in retribution of my sins, suffer that foolish old woman's twaddle to prolong my misery."

It was however her cousin Mary's sufferings, rather than his own, the abridgment of which

induced Frederica to turn a deaf ear to Lady Olivia's volubility. "Excuse me,—excuse me, my dear aunt," she cried, hastily touching her hand in her progress through the hall to her carriage, "for I have not a moment to spare."

"But I *must* speak with you, if it is only for half a second; I have something of great importance to communicate."

"In the afternoon,—in the evening,—I will call upon you; but as you may perceive, the carriage is at the door"—

"But I will step into it, and accompany you."

"Impossible!—Launceston is going with me, and we are to call for a friend."

"A friend!" exclaimed Lady Olivia, contemptuously—"when the best interests of your own *family* are at stake!"

"I grieve to be so ungracious," persisted her niece. "But I really *must* leave you;—I have some important business on my hands."

"Business!" again retorted the aunt, doubly agonized at the idea of being excluded from so luxurious an indulgence. "*You* talk of business, Frederica,—*you* attempt to transact busi-

ness, without my advice and assistance;—*you* who actually omitted to endorse a bank-bill!"

"My dear sister," interposed Lord Launceston, "you forget what precious moments you are wasting. Let me implore you to"—

"As you please!" cried Lady Olivia Tadcaster, growing fiercely indignant, and seating herself on a hall-chair, to recover her breath. "Perhaps, Lord Launceston, you may feel better inclined to honour me with your attention when you learn that my brother Trevelyan is arrived in town; and that you will have to account to him for your past and present conduct."

"For any thing that I care, Lord Trevelyan may—"

"Come away!" interrupted Frederica, her anxiety for a termination of the Waddlestone business redoubled by this intelligence, and still more by the dread of Lady Mary's immediate departure;—and seizing her brother by the arm, she jumped into the carriage, leaving Lady Olivia transfixed in the mahogany hall-chair,— a living parody of the beauteous heroine of Comus.

"Vastly well!—it is all vastly well!" she panted forth, as the chariot rolled from the door —"I shall hear that gracious young gentleman change his note before the day is over. He will find that Lord Trevelyan, of Trevelyan Castle, is not a person to be insulted with impunity. What was that, Martin, my nephew said about Lord Trevelyan just before he left the hall?—'for any thing he cared'—*what* was it?"

"I really cannot take upon myself to say, my lady!" replied the butler, anxious to close the hall door on her departure. "But I heard her ladyship observe that she should be at your house in less than an hour, my lady."

"Did she?—are you sure she said less than an hour?" cried Lady Olivia, astonished that any thing should have escaped her own ears, which, like those of Fine-Ear in the Fairy Tale, were apt to hear the grass grow. "Then I must be off without delay;—for I have got to call in Charles-street on my way home,—and at the Van office about booking the Miss Peewits' trunks,—and at the furrier's, who takes care of

my sable muff and tippet for the summer;—besides leaving my card on Mrs. Camomile, to thank the Doctor for the use of his carriage. In *less* than an hour?—It is now half-past two; I shall never be back in time."

Joyfully did Martin hail her departure!—while Sir Brooke, after cautiously obtruding his head from the study-door to ascertain that she was really gone, stole off in an opposite direction, to bear to Lady Sophia Lee Frederica's pacifying message and entreaties that she would not suffer Lady Mary Trevelyan to quit her protection without a further interview.

In the course of the foregoing narrative we have permitted ourselves to gratify the curiosity of the inquisitive reader and our own taste for diffuse, by such a superabundance of circumstantial detail, that the admirable diplomacy exhibited by Lady Rawleigh at Waddlestone House must be passed over in a very cursory manner. It is well known that women have a peculiar tact for this sort of domestic negociation. They seize the efficient line of attack with the discrimination of a leading counsel, and detect at

once the weak points of the enemy; glide over the smooth passages with a kind of *legato* tenderness, and dash through the difficult bars *fortissimo.*

But it needed all the persuasive gentleness of Frederica's voice,—all the eloquence of her phraseology,—and all the amiable emotion of sisterly partiality trembling on her lips,—to moderate the indignation of Mr. Waddlestone against the imposition practised upon him by Lord Launceston and his friend. There was one point, however, on which Lady Rawleigh rejoiced that her eloquence was not in demand. She felt that she should have been puzzled to find arguments for Leonora's defence;—for the exculpation of a child, who knowing herself to be so tenderly, so exclusively beloved, had enlisted in an ungrateful stratagem to deceive an adoring parent.

"To Lord Launceston and Colonel Rhyse," faltered Mr. W., with a countenance bearing the character of profound emotion, "I can readily concede my pardon;—they are aliens to me and mine,—and have broken a bond of

no peculiar sanctity;—have eaten of my bread and drunk of my cup, it is true—but they have not been unto me as a daughter. Oh! Lady Rawleigh!—may you never know the anguish of treachery from such a source;—may you never learn what it is to find your own heart's blood arrayed in rebellion against you,—to feel yourself deceived by one whom from infancy to maturity you have strained in boundless confidence to your bosom!—But I am justly punished for my infatuation;—I have suffered my child to wander through the corrupt and contaminating mazes of the world of fashion,—and sowed the wind to reap the whirlwind!"

But Frederica, satisfied of her own insufficiency to make the worse appear the better cause in order to appease the wrath of a justly-incensed parent, did not forget the existence of a far more eloquent advocate. She determined to leave the business in the hands of NATURE!—and having summoned the terrified Leonora, had the satisfaction of perceiving that a few bitter tears of contrition shed upon the bosom

of her father, said more in her favour than all the rounded periods which could have been pressed into her service from the eloquence of Lord Advocate Jeffrey, or Lord Chancellor Brougham. Mr. Waddlestone promised *to try* to forgive,—when it was evident that his pardon was already fully accorded. After all, Colonel Rhyse was a young man of prepossessing manners, and good reputation;—it might have been worse!

With Mrs. W., meanwhile, Frederica found her task infinitely less distressing. There was a kind of ludicrous, Mrs. Peachumlike tone of distress in her lamentations over the degeneracy of her daughter in preferring a paltry Honourable to a real bona fide Lord, which blunted all delicacy of emotion in seeking her concurrence in the match. And having at length persuaded the irate lady to join with her husband in bestowing her blessing and forgiveness on the trembling Titania, Lady Rawleigh privately insinuated her opinion that Lord Offaley's interest and her own thousands might possibly procure the honours of a peerage for his second

son;—while, as his elder was still a bachelor, and a notorious Meltonian, there remained a tolerably clear vista towards the earldom.

Before Frederica quitted the house, peace was in some measure restored; and on the whole, the affair was one of less perplexity than she originally anticipated. Mrs. W.'s hysterics had been by no means so vehement as might have been expected from her vulgar egotism; —and although the mortified father still wore upon his brow the expression of severe anguish,—of the disappointment of a man who finds himself wronged, even "there where he had garnered up his heart,"—he had the mercy to smile upon the penitent Leonora, and the forbearance to claim from Lady Rawleigh the continuance of her friendship for his child.

"This is indeed kind of you!" said Frederica in reply, as he led her to her carriage. "Conscious of the unworthy treatment you have received from us, I was apprehensive that both my brother and myself would be henceforward excluded from your good opinion."

"Lord Launceston," said Mr. W. "has con-

ducted himself like a young and thoughtless man; at *his* age perhaps the persuasions of a bosom friend might have urged me into the same error. I am, however, more grieved for the loss of such a son as I flattered myself of finding in your brother than angry with the success of his plot."

"Tell me then that I may send him to obtain your pardon?" said Lady Rawleigh in a low voice, bending from the window of the carriage. "The two offenders, I fancy, are not far distant."

"Not to-day!—I am not equal to seeing them to-day!" said the agitated father, with a pale mournful smile.

"Yes—yes! let the worst be over at once," rejoined Lady R.—And despatching her servant towards the entrance of the court-yard to summon Lord Launceston and Colonel Rhyse, who were waiting in their cabriolet at the gate, she had the satisfaction of seeing the three gentlemen shake hands and enter the house together before she drove back to town.

## CONCLUSION.

On their way from Bruton-street to the house of Colonel Rhyse, Frederica had obtained a promise from her brother that he would meet her at dinner in Charles-street, and take no steps in the interim relative to his uncle's arrival, or to Lucy's enigmatical disappearance. She had even pacified him by a promise to obtain from her mother such intelligence concerning her protégée as might satisfy his doubts on the subject. "But I fairly warn you, my dear William," said Lady Rawleigh "that to my certain knowledge, you have not the least chance of seeing Miss Elbany again!"

None but a lover could have been sufficiently blind to interpret the arch smile with which this declaration was uttered, into the expres-

sion of malicious triumph. Nevertheless it weighed so heavily on the heart of Lord Launceston, that he presented himself at his mother's door between seven and eight o'clock, with a brow as moody as if he had not passed an hour at Waddlestone House in perfect charity with its inmates, and in all the joy of beholding his friend Horatio accepted as the future husband of Leonora.

On the stairs he was accosted by his sister, who begged him to retire with her for a moment to the back drawing-room, as she had something interesting to communicate; and irritated by the brilliancy of her dress, and the evident elation of her spirits—so little in accordance with his own feelings—he followed her into a room where, seated in solemn state on the sofa, he was welcomed by a grave elderly personage—whose star and family resemblance announced the dreaded Earl of Trevelyan!

Indignant to be made the dupe of an ambuscade, Launceston immediately assumed an air of defiance and a tone of self-possession

very little in unison with his real feelings. He listened indeed to his uncle's remonstrances in respectful silence, and hazarded not a word in apology for his own inexplicit and frivolous conduct towards his cousin, which he had long felt to be wholly indefensible. But when, at the close of his oration, Lord Trevelyan proceeded to state that notwithstanding the levity and inconsideration of his conduct, both Lady Mary and himself were willing to fulfil the contract and make him their own by a formal alliance, Lord Launceston no longer scrupled to reply. In firm but not uncourteous terms, he positively declined the proffered honour; and by way of a decisive close to the negociation, frankly acknowledged that he was pledged in heart and hand to another.

"I shall not, however, consider the rejection conclusive," said his delighted uncle, "till you have had an opportunity to admire in your cousin those personal graces which have obtained the applause of half the courts in Europe; and my solicitor will wait upon you to-morrow morning with the project of a settlement which

would put you in possession, on your marriage day of a sum of eighty thousand pounds in ready money, as well as of estates to the amount of ten thousand per annum."

Most magnanimously indignant at this hint of bribery and corruption, the young lord of Marston Park and its mortgages assumed a more heroic air. "Were Lady Mary Trevelyan the most faultless, the most lovely of women," said he, "she could never rival in my estimation the humble and obscure individual to whose happiness I have sworn to devote the homage of my future life. With respect to your lordship's munificence, I trust I may be spared all future allusion to so humiliating a subject."

He rose to leave the apartment, and Frederica seized the opportunity to throw open the folding doors into the drawing-room; where he now beheld to his utter dismay, an assemblage of his nearest friends and relatives attired in all the brilliancy of full dress;—his mother and Lady Olivia, Sir Brooke Rawleigh, the General, and Lady Sophia Lee.

"*Now* for Lady Mary!" thought poor Launceston. And the prospect of being obliged to assume a cold and discourteous demeanour towards a woman, involuntarily imparted the most awkward embarrassment to his air. But it was not his dreaded cousin who, on his entrance, rose from Lady Launceston's side, and advanced towards him! It was Lucy herself—his own poor humble Lucy!—nor could he by any means understand the folly which had enfolded her majestic figure in robings of the richest satin, and encircled her beautiful head and graceful arms with a profusion of diamonds. In spite of this superfluous magnificence, however, and in spite of the audience by which she was surrounded, her manner had lost nothing of its usual warmth and frankness.

"My dear William!" she exclaimed, accepting his extended hands, "my dear cousin!—I read in my father's countenance that all is right—that you are not to be dissuaded from your engagements to poor Lucy."

"Well! young Sir!—do you still persist in rejecting my daughter?" said Lord Trevelyan,

his eyes glistening with the emotion of gratified paternal love; while Frederica, her husband, and friends, gathered round the group.

Lord Launceston's reply to this inquiry need not be repeated;—it sufficed to give rise to a general family congratulation.

"Mother—mother!" cried he, leading his plighted bride towards Lady Launceston, to meet her maternal embrace, "I did not think you could be such a traitress."

"My dear son!" she replied, affectionately folding her niece in her arms, "believe me we very quiet people are the only depositories for a secret. You have often thought me insensible to your vexations;—but with such children as mine, I could not but feel satisfied that our difficulties must eventually terminate in honour and happiness!"

It was a delightful dinner—a charming evening!—one of those glorious summer holidays which could sanction even Lady Launceston in enjoying the luxury of open windows and a verandah filled with flowers. During Frederica's

journey to Kensington Gore that morning, parliament had been prorogued; and Sir Brooke being once more a free man, it was settled that the whole party should immediately adjourn to Ash Bank, for the solemnization of the marriage by which it was to be still more closely united. —Lady Olivia's heartfelt delight at this promised accession of seven visitors to her beautiful villa, almost silenced her accustomed garrulity!

In the course of the evening, however, she managed to find in Sir Brooke Rawleigh and the patient General an audience for two signal pieces of scandal she had picked up in the course of her morning's perambulations. It appeared that Mr. Erskyne having detected his wife in a correspondence of the most equivocal nature with Lord Calder, and indulged in much violence on the occasion,—the thoughtless Louisa had seized the opportunity to quit his house, and throw herself on the protection of a man very ill-prepared, and very little inclined to make any sacrifice in favour of a woman so valueless in his estimation; and that Lady

Rochester and her set were already loud in the expression of their indignation at a measure insuring the dissolution of their coterie.

"What a pity," exclaimed General Lee, "that Calder cannot delegate his unfortunate nephew, young Rockingham, to represent him on this occasion by tendering *his* hand to Mrs. Erskyne. Nothing would be more inconvenient to a man attached to society like Calder, than an alliance with a divorcée; and poor Alfred has so long been deputed to execute his uncle's unacceptable duties, that I should not be much surprised to see him bribed into marrying that unfortunate woman at whose feet he has long been sighing."

"But you *will* be extremely astonished, en attendant," cried Lady Olivia, "to learn that Mr. Broughley is engaged to Lady Lavinia Lisle; and that they are to pass the honeymoon in a voyage to Alexandria, from whence they proceed on a mission to Timbuctoo, for the discovery of the lost tribes of Israel."

"And what is this history," inquired Sir Brooke of General Lee, "concerning Vaux's

proposals to Lady Margaret Fieldham?—They say it is a scandalous take-in."

"Nay!" replied General Lee, "after all it is only the biter bit. Dynley, Indice, and Morse, and several other club-idlers of Vaux's acquaintance, being as they assert heartily sick of Lady Margaret's airs and grimaces and intrusions on their attention, resolved to get rid of her ladyship by domesticating her in some mediocre alliance. Accordingly they laid a trap for Vaux by whispering in his hearing, as a great secret, that she was about to derive a splendid fortune from the death of her aunt, the Duchess of Trimblestown,—who caught cold at Calder's fête and is now dying!"

"And the blockhead actually proposed on this temptation?—"

"The *rogue* did,—and was accepted!—A charming couple they will make, and a noble ménage will they enjoy!—and thus Lady Rochester loses both her brother and her lover by a single stroke of misfortune."

"My dear Frederica!" whispered Lady Sophia Rhyse, drawing her friend away from

the group, and interrupting her pensive meditations over the errors of Louisa; "While your brother and Mary are murmuring soft nothings to each other at yonder window, Lady Launceston and Lord Trevelyan are deep in finance; I heard them plotting together just now concerning the marriage settlements.—Go! dearest,—go and interpose a word of advice on the important article of PIN MONEY!—"

FINIS.

C. WHITING, BEAUFORT HOUSE, STRAND.